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The House of Coburg and Queen Victoria: A study of duty and affection

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THE HOUSE OF COBURG AND QUEEN VICTORIA:

A STORY OF DUTY AND AFFECTION

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of History

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska at Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Terrance Shellard

June 1971

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Accepted for the faculty of the Graduate
College of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of
Arts.

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PREFACE

Slowly the magnifying glass moves over the map of Germany. Oh, not the solid-color map of post-Bismarckian Germany, nor yet the dissected, parsed chart of occupation zones that followed World War II, but rather the ancient, crazy quilt map of Germany before the Second Reich. Somewhere just a little to the north and west of Bohemia, it pauses, and there, nestled among the many other tiny, insignificant principalities and duchies is the Grand Duchy of Saxe-Coburg. How small it seems, how unimportant, how easily passed over without notice--and yet it was the seedbed of kings!

In King Edward VII E. F. Benson wrote:

In all the history of Royal Houses there was never a more sensational romance than the rise of the House of Coburg. . . .
. . . with the fire and swiftness of a rocket [this] . . . line shot up into the empyrean, and magnificently exploded into a bouquet of crowns and sceptres.¹

Likewise, Hans Roger Madol in Ferdinand of Bulgaria says, most simply and forcefully, "All Coburgs were born kings."²

Yet, after a study of the rise to power of this remarkable family, one might be inclined to say that all Coburgs were not born kings, they did not enter this world with crowns on their heads, rather they found crowns, almost in the way peasants were once said to find babies in cabbage patches.

¹E. F. Benson, King Edward VII: An Appreciation (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1934), p. 1. Hereafter cited as Edward VII.

²Hans Roger Madol, Ferdinand of Bulgaria, transl. by Kenneth Kirkmess (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1933), p. 22. Hereafter cited as Ferdinand of Bulgaria.

Adrien de Meeiis in his History of the Belgians mentions with surprise that the story of the Coburg dynasty "has not yet tempted the skill of any dramatist or novelist."³ Well might he say this, for in the story of the Coburgs are elements of ambition and fulfillment, of happiness and tragedy, of lust and love, that range over the European stage from Spain to the Balkans, and from a tiny German duchy to the world's loftiest and most distinguished throne. Victoria of Great Britain, the sovereign who personified the very acme of 19th Century monarchy was, by blood, and by express choice, a Coburg. The family qualities of high intellect, good looks, personal charm, and forethoughtful planning carried the members of this House, linked as they were by ties of duty and affection, to the very forefront of European prestige.

³Adrien de Meeiis, History of the Belgians, transl. by G. Gordon (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publisher, 1932), p. 285.

I. THE ANCIENT HOUSE OF COBURG

The history of the House of Wettin may be traced with certainty to the year 989 A.D. This very ancient house first ruled over the territory round about Meissen and later added to it Upper Saxony and Thuringia. By the 15th Century the house was divided into two branches. The elder line, the Albertine branch, remained the possessors of Meissen and Saxony. Their title was raised in 1806, after the destruction of the Holy Roman Empire, from Elector to King. A scion of this line, Frederick Augustus I, embraced the Roman Catholic faith upon his election to the throne of Poland, and so the close connection with the other branch of the house ceased. The branch that remained Protestant was known as the Ernestine line, and it held sway over the area of Thuringia. Yet the long-standing and widespread Germanic practice of dividing and sub-dividing inheritances among the sons of each generation had further broken the holdings of this line, and its various branches, into a variety of petty duchies.¹ So it was that when Ernst the Pious, Grand Duke of Saxe-Gotha-Coburg, and great-grandson of John Frederick the Magnanimous, last Elector of Thuringia in the Ernestine line, died in 1679 his lands were divided up among his sons.² The oldest son, Frederick, received the duchies of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg. Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld went to the youngest son, John Ernst.

¹O. Grey, The Early Years of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1867), p. 26. Hereafter cited as Early Years.

²Ibid.

John Ernst was succeeded by his son, Franz Joseph, who had four sons. The oldest of these, Ernst Frederick, succeeded to the dignity of reigning Duke in 1764. Ernst Frederick was succeeded by Franz Frederick in 1800.³ At the time of the birth of Princess Victoria in 1819 there were five such small states: Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg, Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, Saxe-Meiningen, and Saxe-Hildburghausen.⁴ It is not difficult to see, then, that the Ernestine princes, because of this practice of division and sub-division, had forfeited much of their chance to exercise any great influence in German affairs.⁵

When war broke out in 1805 between France and Prussia, Franz Frederick Antony, the reigning Grand Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, found himself too preoccupied with his own restive, tax-laden subjects to take part. In his place, however, his eldest son, Ernst, went off to fight the French in a war in which Bonaparte won. The French Emperor was magnanimous in victory, and instead of meting out punishment he allowed the Grand Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld to send a plenipotentiary to become a member of the Rheinbund.

Franz Frederick Antony did not benefit personally from the pact with Napoleon, for he died before it could be signed.⁶ The new reigning

³Ibid., pp. 26-27.

⁴Arthur Christopher Benson and Viscount Esher, eds., The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence Between the Years 1837 and 1861 (3 vols.; London: John Murray, 1908), I, Hereafter cited as Letters of Queen Victoria.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Alvin Redman, The House of Hanover (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1960), p. 180. Hereafter cited as House of Hanover.

Grand Duke was Ernst I, oldest son of Franz and his wife, Augusta, daughter of Henry XXIV, Prince of Reuss-Ebersdorff.⁷ Napoleon then reversed his attitude, and sought revenge on the new Grand Duke.⁸ The French occupied the dukedom, and Bonaparte looked with great suspicion on all members of the ducal family.⁹ The Grand Duchy was confiscated, and the personal fortune of the new Grand Duke seized. Desperate, Ernst turned to the Tsar of Russia, from whom he sought intercession with Napoleon.¹⁰

The first encounter between the Coburg Prince and the Russian Tsar had taken place in 1795 when Ernst had traveled to St. Petersburg with his mother and his three sisters. Ernst's mother, a relative of the Tsarina Catherine, had been commanded to bring her daughters to the Imperial Russian Court in order that the Tsarina might select a bride for her sadistic grandson, Constantine. Juliane, youngest and prettiest of the Coburg princesses, was the Imperial choice. After making the selection, the Tsarina sent the Grand Duchess back to Coburg, but Ernst and Juliane stayed on in St. Petersburg. The great Catherine had taken a liking to Ernst, who at the age of eleven already displayed the good looks that were a Coburg family trait that was to be an enormous asset

⁷Grey, Early Years, p. 29.

⁸Redman, House of Hanover, p. 180.

⁹Grey, Early Years, p. 29.

¹⁰Redman, House of Hanover, p. 180.

in all the years to come. Shortly, Ernst was created a colonel in the Imperial Grenadiers.¹¹

During the period in which Juliane was being trained for an imperial marriage, she, Ernst, and Constantine were playmates. Juliane became the victim of the jokes of the two boys, for Ernst was much too diplomatic to resist Constantine's cruel ideas. Aside from tormenting Juliane, Ernst and Constantine indulged themselves in such other sadistic exercises as shooting live rats out of cannons and kicking hussars to death. Nor did they avoid the plentiful vice offered by the city of St. Petersburg. Ernst was, however, always clever and circumspect, and he was able to maintain himself in favor, not only with Constantine, but with the Grand Duke Alexander, the Grand Duchess Elizabeth, and, of course, the Tsarina.¹²

All this effort was not in vain, for Tsar Alexander did intervene on Ernst's behalf with Napoleon. As a result, Ernst was allowed to join the Confederation of the Rhine. This did not satisfy Ernst, however, for he had within him the same ambitious drive that marked so many later Coburgs. He made a claim for damages done by French troops who had passed through neutral Coburg. In order that he might press this claim in person, he ventured into the lion's den and made a trip to Paris. His greatest assets for this diplomatic attempt were his handsomeness and elegance of stature, which were remarked upon, but which were tempered with a certain coldness of demeanor that is nearly always to be found lurking

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., p. 181.

beneath the Coburg charm. As added assurance, perhaps, he took with him his younger brother, Prince Leopold, who was thus given an early opportunity to absorb the essentials of the use of personal charm as a diplomatic tool.¹³

Unfortunately for the two Coburg princes, this was Napoleon's flood tide of success. The competition for his favors was intense. Swarms of German princelings clustered around the Emperor, but he paid them little attention. In fact, the Emperor reduced the princely states to a mere thirty-eight, one of which was Coburg.¹⁴

Yet, diplomacy was not the only interest Grand Duke Ernst found in the French capital. He became deeply enamoured of a young girl, Pauline Panam. Mademoiselle Panam lived with her widowed mother; her widowed sister, Mme. Lingis; and Mme. Lingis' child, Josephine, in quite modest and reduced circumstances that followed upon a series of financial reverses for the family.¹⁵

The manless household of the Panams was dazzled by the handsome and brilliant German ruler. Ernst's suggestion that he would arrange for Pauline to become a lady-of-honour to his sister, Grand Duchess Constantine, did no harm to his suit. He had prudently suppressed the fact that Juliane had left the brutal Grand Duke. Not surprisingly, Ernst became a habitual caller at the Panam home. Many girls in Coburg could

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 182.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 183.

attest to the fact that Ernst was a libertine, and so it is not surprising that his conquest of Pauline was accomplished shortly. In Pauline Panam's own words:

He came that morning; I had been for some days indisposed, and continued in bed; my sister had just left the house. "My dear little one," he said, "I am very unhappy; my affairs demand my presence in Germany; I must begone, [sic] I must quit you."

I immediately wept bitterly; he took his seat at the foot of my bed, and dried my tears with kisses, the sudden news completely overcame me; suffering and ill as I was I had no power left but to sigh, and had no thought of resisting his caresses. The more he talked to me, respecting this unfortunate separation, the more copiously my tears flowed. He redoubled his ardour to alleviate my sorrow, whilst I became more incapable of extricating myself from his arms. He took advantage of this situation, he profited by my sorrow, my ignorance, my weakness; I became culpable, without feeling conscious of my faults. Never did a woman fall more blindly into the abyss. I was but fourteen.¹⁶

This is supposedly Pauline Panam's story in her own words. It has been used by Alvin Redman in his House of Hanover, and a reproduced section of Madame Panam's story was one of the works consulted by Lytton Strachey in preparing his Queen Victoria, yet the reader may perhaps be excused the exercise of some skepticism in reading her story. One is reminded of the old adage, "Anyone who is seduced wanted to be seduced."

In the January that followed, Napoleon was again back in Paris, but he was always too busy for Ernst to have a chance to see him. All

¹⁶Pauline Panam, Memoirs of Madame Panam, transl. by W. H. Ireland (n.p., 1823), pagination not given, quoted in Redman, House of Hanover, p. 184.

the while Ernst was receiving urgent appeals to come home to Coburg. His mother, the formidable Dowager Grand Duchess Augusta, was of the opinion that he was wasting time in Paris on a lost cause. Yet, Ernst, because of his affair with Pauline Panam, was strongly inclined to remain in the French capital.¹⁷

Finally, the Dowager Grand Duchess commanded that Ernst come home. A last attempt to see Napoleon resulted in an audience, but nothing else, and there was no further excuse for staying in Paris. Ernst decided to take Pauline with him. Pauline's mother was happy to hear that her daughter was now to become Lady-in-Waiting to Grand Duchess Juliane, and she enthusiastically declared that she would accompany her daughter so that she might turn her over to the Grand Duchess.¹⁸

This, of course, was hardly what Ernst had hoped for, and it became imperative to him that Pauline's mother be persuaded to remain in Paris. He managed to convince her that the trip to Coburg would be much too arduous, but she then insisted that her older daughter, the widow Lingis, must accompany Pauline. At the last moment, Venus must have intervened, for Madame Panam fell ill and it became necessary for Madame Lingis to stay with her and nurse her. The Duke now suggested that Pauline's traveling companion could be Madame Lingis' little daughter, Josephine. To this arrangement everyone finally agreed.¹⁹

Traveling arrangements seemed rather unchivalrous, for Ernst

¹⁷Redman, House of Hanover, p. 184.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 185.

¹⁹Ibid.

proceeded alone to Coburg, while the two minor girls, dressed as boys, followed later as best they could.²⁰

Meanwhile, Ernst, having reached Coburg, found that his mother was firmly opposed to his plans. She had no particular scruples about the seduction of local village girls, but the importation of an official mistress was quite another matter. Furthermore, she had never forgiven Ernst for his friendship with the Grand Duke Constantine, and the idea of making Pauline a Lady-in-Waiting to his former mate was out of the question.²¹

Grand Duchess Augusta had stagemanaged the marriages of her four daughters, and she saw no reason why she should not also arrange the lives of her sons to the best advantage. She had attempted to forge a link with Imperial Russia through the marriage of Juliane.²² Although this marriage had come off on schedule when Julie reached the age of fifteen, it proved to be an unhappy one and she left Russia in 1802. She subsequently lived at Elfenau, Switzerland.²³

If we are to follow the opinion of Prince Leopold, this marriage could have been much better managed; indeed, he counted it a mistake:

[The Empress Catharine] being anxious for the marriage of the Grand-duke Constantine, procured through M. de Budberg, distinguished both as a minister and a general, a visit from the three princesses of Saxe-Coburg, who were all undoubtedly

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Grey, Early Years, p. 28.

very handsome. The Grand-duke fancied most Julie, the youngest of the three, very pretty, but still a mere child, being only fifteen years of age. If the grand-duke's choice had fallen on Antoinette, she would have suited that position wonderfully well. I know much of all this from Constantine himself. He told me that the empress-mother, looking to the two younger sons, did not wish the "ménages" of the two elder brothers to succeed. He himself was dreadfully "taquin;" and, "comme surcroit de malheur," the then Grand-duke Alexander and his wife were Aunt Julie's great friends, and supported her in the little domestic squabbles. Without the shocking hypocrisy of the empress-mother, things might have gone on. The grand-duke admired his wife extremely; and with an amiable husband, generous-hearted as she was, she would have been an excellent wife. She felt unhappy and ended without a formal separation, by leaving Russia in 1802.²⁴

Antoinette, the second Coburg daughter, who also enjoyed a full compliment of the Coburg beauty, was married to Prince Alexander of Württemberg.²⁵ The Württemberg-Coburg nuptials took place in 1798.²⁶ Since this Prince was known for his shocking ugliness and brutish demeanor, this was hardly a love-match. In fact, Antoinette had been awakened after her wedding night to the sight of her bridegroom sitting up in bed, gnawing on a ham-bone like a hungry dog. However, this "dog" was the brother of Tsarina Maria and enjoyed the position of General-in-Chief in the Imperial Army.²⁷ Since his sister was the influential mother of Tsars Alexander I and Nicholas I, they made their place of residence in

²⁴Leopold I, King of the Belgians, "Reminiscences of the King of the Belgians," Appendix A, Grey, Early Years, p. 295. Leopold's writings are scattered about in various places in several books commissioned by Queen Victoria. Information about the title and facts of publication are scanty and sometimes contradictory. There was apparently a volume published for private circulation as well.

²⁵Redman, House of Hanover, p. 185.

²⁶Grey, Early Years, p. 28.

²⁷Redman, House of Hanover, pp. 185-186.

Russia.²⁸ Perhaps not surprisingly the Princess Antoinette died shortly after they moved to St. Petersburg.²⁹

It is true that Grand Duchess Augusta had slackened the reins a bit where her oldest daughter, Sophie, was concerned. Since she lacked the valuable Coburg good looks, she was permitted to marry for love, or, at least, to accept the suitor she chose. Her husband was an Austrian count, Emmanuel Mensdorff-Pouilly.³⁰ Count Mensdorff-Pouilly had already had something of an international background, for he was an émigré from the French Revolution, and he later held military rank in the Austrian army. His marriage to Sophia was accomplished in 1804.³¹

The remaining Coburg daughter was Princess Victoria Marie Louise. Victoria was born August 17, 1786. She was married in 1803 to the aging and sickly hereditary Prince of Leiningen, Emich Karl, and, following his death, in 1813, to a British prince. The Leiningen marriage had left her with one son, Karl Emich, Prince of Leiningen, and one daughter, Anna Feodora, who eventually was to become, by marriage, Princess of Hohenlohe-Langenbourg. The British marriage took place in 1818 and the groom was Edward, Duke of Kent and son of King George III. The family pressures from his side that made for this marriage will be discussed later. Suffice it to say, for the moment, that it was this Coburg marriage

²⁸Grey, Early Years, p. 28.

²⁹Redman, House of Hanover, p. 186.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Grey, Early Years, p. 27.

that produced, on May 24, 1819, the girl who would one day be Queen Victoria.³²

Grand Duke Ernst, of course, also fitted into the Coburg plan for dynastic marriages. After considering the possibilities with great care, Dowager Grand Duchess Augusta had decided that her oldest son had better try for the Russian Grand Duchess Anna Paulovna, daughter of Tsar Paul. She was undeterred by the fact that, at the time, Grand Duchess Anna was only a child. Nor did this particularly bother the Dowager Tsarina Paul who was sole guardian to her daughters. Such a match would scarcely be a brilliant one for a Russian Grand Duchess, yet she was sufficiently vulnerable to the Coburg charm to like Ernst and to be agreeable. She announced that in the fullness of time Ernst could pay court to Anne. This, then, is why Grand Duchess Augusta was so opposed to Ernst's companion from Paris.³³

Since he was made painfully aware that he had committed a serious indiscretion in bringing Pauline to Coburg, Ernst decided he must keep her in secret. When the two girls arrived they were taken to an inn. Pauline noticed that upon their reunion one of the Grand Duke's most pressing concerns was to know how much money they had spent during the trip.³⁴

There was some justification for the Grand Duke's concern, for

³²Theodore Martin, The Life of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort (5 vols.; London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1875), I, 12. Hereafter cited as Martin, Life of the Prince Consort.

³³Redman, House of Hanover, p. 186.

³⁴Ibid.

the revenues of Saxe-Coburg were barely enough to maintain the hollow echo of old Versailles that was the Grand Ducal Court. Although Ernst was reigning Grand Duke, all real power rested with his mother, as it had in her husband's reign. The ladies of her court were definitely not ostentatious, but plain and even shabby.³⁵

Since Ernst dared not stand up to his mother, and since he felt unable to part with Pauline, he took a middle course, and decided she must stay in Coburg incognito. There were many French refugees drifting into Coburg at this time so that two more foreign "lads" would not excite much interest. The real problem would be arranging to see Pauline, for the visits of the Grand Duke would most likely be noticed. To avoid this danger, Ernst at first placed the two disguised girls in a gardner's cottage on the palace grounds. But Ernst decided that these quarters were just too near the old Grand Duchess for safety, and so he removed his two young charges to a farm near Essau, some three miles from his palace.³⁶

This ploy did not work. Word soon came to Ernst's sister, Countess Mensdorff, that the Grand Duke was in the habit of taking long and lonely rides into the country. She suspected a love intrigue, and had Ernst followed. Her motives were kind ones, for she hoped to protect her brother from the anger of the old Grand Duchess. Very soon she paid a visit to the secluded farm and at once guessed the identity of Pauline. She felt that Pauline was not a dangerous adventuress, but a naive girl.³⁷

³⁵Ibid., p. 187.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., p. 188.

Countess Mensdorff then confronted her brother with her discovery and suggested that he bring Pauline to her home. When Ernst did so, the Countess promised Pauline that she would be her friend. Sophia was faithful to her promise, and after a few days she took Pauline to visit her sister, the Grand Duchess Constantine.³⁸

These visits had unexpected effects, however, for as Pauline Panam later wrote:

In my excursions to Coburg and its environs, Prince Leopold, brother of the Duke, had seen me; perhaps he had formed part of the cavalcade which I had so unfortunately encountered near the farm of Eberhard. Be this as it may, he was not satisfied with a casual glance but resolved to pay me a visit.

For this purpose a very singular and incommodious time was selected; seven in the morning being the hour when he rang at the door of my house. I was still in bed, fatigued with the walks I had taken during the week, when he announced himself by whistling a French air, in one of the compartments leading to my bed-room. Astonished beyond expression, I jumped from my couch, and had covered myself with my dressing gown, just as he entered.

He is a tall young man, with a deceitful expression in his countenance, having an ungracious, sentimental smile. After excusing himself, in bad French, for the mode of his introduction to my presence, he began to commiserate my situation, and blame his brother, intimating how strongly he was interested in my welfare, deprecating the badness of my lodging, and expressing fears as to the state of my health in so wretched a habitation. I made no reply, but no sooner had I found an opportunity of approaching the door than I fled from his presence, proceeding with celerity from one chamber to another. I mounted the staircases, traversed I know not how many desolate apartments, and at length took refuge in an old loft, which served as a granary for flour. I immediately closed and secured the door, and

³⁸Ibid.

secreted myself behind the sacks, when five hours passed before I summoned sufficient courage to quit my place of concealment.

On descending I found the prince was gone; but the Duke speedily after made his appearance. It became necessary to detail to him all that had transpired, when a scene took place of the most terrible jealousy, fury, passion, and irritated pride, which I used every effort to appease in the best way possible.³⁹

Since there is only Pauline Panam's word for this, one might be excused for wondering if the situation was as she describes, or, indeed, if it happened at all.

Be that as it may, the story of Pauline soon came to the attention of the Dowager Grand Duchess. Augusta was then prevailed upon by her two daughters to receive Pauline Panam, which she did. Somewhat surprisingly, she found herself as charmed with the young girl as were her daughters. In fact, Pauline became a court favorite. The Grand Duchess, however, did not relent from her position that Pauline was not to become a Lady-in-Waiting. Instead, she was happy to let her serve as unpaid companion.⁴⁰

This seemingly agreeable ménage was soon shattered owing to an act of Nature. Pauline tearfully announced to Ernst that she was pregnant. To Ernst this was bad news, indeed, especially since by this time his mother had lost interest in Pauline. Some of this change of feeling grew out of two letters that the Grand Duchess had received. The first

³⁹Panam, Memoirs of Madame Panam, quoted in Redman, House of Hanover, p. 188-189.

⁴⁰Redman, House of Hanover, p. 189.

of these came from Pauline's sister, Madame Lingis. It expressed her thanks to the Duchess for her kindness, and asked when Pauline would begin her position with Grand Duchess Constantine. The second letter, which was addressed to Grand Duke Ernst, but was opened by the Dowager Grand Duchess, was from Auguste, Pauline's brother. Auguste demanded to know his sister's exact status at the Grand Ducal Court. He went on to say that if he did not receive this information, the two girls were to be escorted to Paris at once.⁴¹

These letters caused the Grand Duchess to insist that the girls be sent home immediately. Ernst would probably have been glad to obey this command, if it had not been for Pauline's still-secret pregnancy. He was now involved in responsibilities that might cost him dearly. However, Ernst had formed a plan. The younger girl, Josephine, was attending a school at Amorbach, in order that she might be out of the way. The Duke now hoped to send Pauline there as well. In Amorbach she could undergo her confinement and still be within reach.⁴²

Ernst, therefore, told the Duchess Augusta that Pauline would go to Amorbach until her brother, Auguste, could come for her. Surprised, but agreeable, the Dowager Grand Duchess wrote to her son-in-law, the Prince of Leiningen, who was a resident of Amorbach, and asked that he take care of Madame Panam until her brother should come.⁴³

⁴¹Ibid., p. 190.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

This arrangement did not last either. Pauline was restless, lonely, and dissatisfied at Amorbach. She was seldom able to see her niece because of school rules, and she was not soothed by the bitter attitude of the Prince of Leiningen, who had come to dislike the Coburgs. Eventually, she was able to persuade the Prince, against his better judgment, to return her to Coburg, where she again moved into the inn.⁴⁴

From there she went to the palace to appeal to the Dowager Duchess. In a furious scene everything came into the open. Both Grand Duke Ernst and his mother were very angry at Pauline. The old Grand Duchess felt that it was the influence of this girl that was keeping Ernst from pressing his suit in Russia. The angry Dowager Grand Duchess won the day. Ernst agreed to go to Russia, and Pauline promised to remove herself to some place where she could have her child quietly. Her sister, Madame Lingis, was to be asked to join her.⁴⁵

Madame Lingis, when she saw the way matters really stood, was persuaded to take no precipitate action. Instead, she wrote to Paris giving a false, but pleasing, picture of life at the Coburg Court. The girls, she wrote, were too young, as yet, for their official positions, but they would surely be forthcoming in the future.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 191.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

The Panam girls moved to Frankfort to await the birth of Pauline's child. Things did not go smoothly, however, for the letters that Ernst sent to them from St. Petersburg contained, not money, but only promises. Finally, even the letters stopped coming. When that happened Pauline wrote to Prince Leopold for help.⁴⁷

Prince Leopold replied to Pauline:

Mademoiselle--

I remit you by M. Titel a hundred florins to supply your exigencies, and let me advise you to be economical, as it is not convenient to send money at all times; live, therefore, in such a way as to regulate your expenses to your finances.

Leopold, Prince of Saxe-Coburg⁴⁸

On March 4, 1809 Pauline gave birth to her child, which she named Ernst, after the Grand Duke of Coburg. She continued to ask for money, but she got no answers.⁴⁹

In St. Petersburg, Grand Duke Ernst was also meeting with difficulties. The Tsarina had received the news of Ernst's involvement with Pauline, and she had concluded that he was not an ideal mate for her daughter. Since she had suffered through many unhappy experiences with an insane husband who kept offensive mistresses, she resolved to spare her daughter a similar fate.⁵⁰

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 191-192.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 192.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

There was, however, considerably more to this situation than that. At an earlier time Napoleon, who was looking for a military alliance, had interested himself in the Tsarina's daughter, Catharine. To preclude any eventuality the Tsarina had quickly married her daughter to the Duke of Oldenburg. Now, with an Imperial French divorce in the wind, Napoleon might show an interest in Anna. In order that this should not happen, the Tsarina decided to permit the Grand Duke of Saxe-Coburg to stay on in Russia so that, if the situation came to it, she could claim that he was engaged to Anna.⁵¹

Ernst was not privy to this secret reasoning, and so he regarded himself as being really engaged to young Anna, and felt at liberty to find diversion in other directions. Unbeknownst to him, the Tsarina was having him watched at all times. Blindly, Ernst stayed on in Russia until the spring of 1809 when France and Austria went to war and he was called home.⁵²

The terms of the Rheinbund made Grand Duke Ernst the ally of France, a most awkward position, since his own brother, Ferdinand, held a command position in the army of Austria. Ernst sent his Coburg army to help the French, but he excused himself under the excuse of illness as a result of a fall from a horse.⁵³

He visited Frankfort in July and called upon Pauline and young Ernst who was now four months old. He was bothered by their living

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

conditions, but, except for promises, left nothing behind. The Panams were receiving occasional remittances from Coburg, but they did not go far, and Madame Panam, who was ill, had come from Paris to join the household.⁵⁴

In these circumstances Pauline made friends with a retired French general, who was wealthy, and through him Madame Lingis secured a position at Dresden as dame de compagnie. Pauline went with her to Dresden and, on the way, stopped off at Coburg to once again beg for help. She had a long and stormy meeting with the Dowager Grand Duchess. Pauline was determined that she would not leave Coburg until she was assured of the future of her son. This went on for about a month's time until, at last, she received a call from Major Szymborski, who represented the Duke. He managed to persuade her to sign this contract under her newly assumed name:

Article 1 -- An allowance will be made to Madame A. P. Alexandre of 3,000 francs, as an annual pension.

Article 2 -- This sum will be paid by a banker resident in the city she shall inhabit, so that every two months one sixth of the amount may be drawn.

Article 3 -- The debts of Madame A. P. Alexandre contracted at Wilhelmsbad, and the amounts which have been given in by her, shall be liquidated.

Article 4 -- Money shall be found to defray her expenses as far as Dresden.

Article 5 -- Twelve hundred francs shall be paid to procure the furniture necessary for her apartments.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 193.

Article 6 -- All the debts she shall in future contract are not to be liquidated.

Article 7 -- Madame A. P. Alexandre shall as speedily as possible quit the estates of His Serene Highness the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, and never return; without which the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th articles are invalid.⁵⁵

Madame Alexandre, as she was now known, established her household at Dresden, and things went rather well for them until one day the Grand Duke of Coburg visited her. At seventeen she was more beautiful than before, and Ernst, infatuated all over again, was very angry when she rejected his advances. Though he tried several times to court her, she continued to resist. Discouraged at last, he returned to St. Petersburg to try once more to win Grand Duchess Anna. Since the Dowager Tsarina had no further need of him as a blind, he was openly rejected.⁵⁶ The proposed marriage with Grand Duchess Anna was broken off in 1812.⁵⁷ There was nothing to do but to return to Coburg where he was forced to endure his mother's bewailings of their poverty.⁵⁸

Actually, this poverty was a highly relative one, for Ernst had made a small fortune by smuggling arms to the enemies of France during the war. If Napoleon had ever heard that Coburg, which he already detested, had done this, it would surely have meant the end. Since Prince Ferdinand was commanding an Austrian army and Prince Leopold held rank

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 194.

⁵⁷Grey, Early Years, p. 29.

⁵⁸Redman, House of Hanover, p. 194.

in the army of Imperial Russia, Napoleon had once said: "Wherever I go, I find a Coburg in the ranks of my enemies."⁵⁹

By the spring of 1812 the march of events saw Ernst again in Dresden. War with Russia had broken out and the princes of the Rheinbund were called to meet with the French Emperor. It was in May that the German sovereigns assembled in Dresden. Ernst brought with him his younger brother, Ferdinand, but canny Leopold, feeling it unsafe for him to appear before Napoleon, slipped away to Vienna and thence to Italy.⁶⁰

As Prince Leopold was to put it later:

Germany was, at the beginning of 1812, in the lowest and most humiliating position; Austria and Prussia sunk to be auxiliaries; everybody frightened and submissive, except Spain, supported by England.

The two elder brothers were chiefly at Coburg. The Mensdorffs came also, as well as Victoire, the Princess of Leiningen.⁶¹

November ushered in a turnabout in fortunes. Rumors filtered back to Germany of Bonaparte's defeat in Russia. The three Coburg princes rejoiced. Ferdinand departed for Vienna to lead his Austrian troops. Leopold went to Kalesch in Poland to join the Tsar Alexander. He became the first German prince to do service in Russia's army. He found himself attached to the staff of the Grand Duke Constantine, who was commanding the Guards. During all this flurry of activity Grand

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 195.

⁶¹Leopold I, King of the Belgians, Reminiscences of King Leopold, Letters and Reports to Queen Victoria (Volume for Private Circulation, 1862), pagination not given, quoted in Redman, House of Hanover, p. 195.

Duke Ernst returned to Coburg where he waited before committing himself. Eventually, he joined the victorious allies against Napoleon.⁶² In a very real sense it was not until the emancipation of Germany that Ernst really came into his inheritance as reigning Grand Duke of Saxe-Coburg at last.⁶³

While these great events resolved themselves, Pauline Panam huddled in Dresden, which suffered greatly from the war. Fortunately, Pauline was able to enlist the help of some French generals who gave her a pass to Frankfort. So it was that she was living in Frankfort when, in November, all three of the Coburg princes arrived in that city. Ernst was bent upon yet another marriage possibility. This time, he sought the jeweled hand of Princess Hermanie of Anhalt-Schaumburg.⁶⁴

When Pauline heard of his arrival she tried, in vain to get the chance to speak to him. Even the intercession of the Prince Primate, who had befriended her when she was in Frankfort before, did no good. Then, suddenly, there came to Pauline a new guardian angel in a strange disguise. The Grand Duke Constantine, who now hated the Coburgs, was told of her plight by Count Trogoff, another of her friends. Constantine still chafed over his Coburg wife, Juliane, who had left him, and he went to see Pauline. He was shocked by the conditions in which she lived, and offered her his aid. This seems quite out of character for him. Constantine was a repulsively ugly man whose appearance did not belie his

⁶²Redman, House of Hanover, p. 195.

⁶³Grey, Early Years, p. 29.

⁶⁴Redman, House of Hanover, p. 195.

his reputation. He was much feared and hated.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, for whatever reasons, he was most kind to Pauline and her son, Ernst. He set aside a large amount of money for their needs, and upon departure, declared of little Ernst, "No one can say he is not of the family."⁶⁶

Grand Duke Ernst was very angry when word reached him of this interference, but Constantine was too powerful a man to alienate. Aside from that, there was his hoped-for marriage alliance with the wealthy Princess Hermanie to consider. No breath of scandal must harm his chances with this wealthy lady. Therefore, a policy of repentance and kindness toward Pauline became the order of the day:

The Duke presented himself daily to weep over the injuries I had experienced; I was provided with some money, and my debts were discharged, and I beheld Ernst in the arms of his father.

I was anxious to let the Duke know, that, during the recent visit, His Imperial Highness had deigned to promise my mother that the welfare of my boy should be attended to, and that he would not fail to repeat his call.⁶⁷

Grand Duke Ernst made an attempt to convince Pauline that Constantine might have ulterior motives, but she remained seemingly unconvinced. Failing this, he then tried to blacken her character in the eyes of Constantine through the influence of other people. One of these people was Prince Leopold, but Constantine would not be influenced. Instead, he made Leopold accompany him to Pauline's house. Confronted with Pauline and the widow Panam, Leopold admitted to their assertions.⁶⁸

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 196.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 197.

⁶⁷Panam, Memoirs of Madame Panam, quoted in Redman, House of Hanover, p. 197.

⁶⁸Redman, House of Hanover, p. 198.

Constantine now went even further, and demanded that Ernst deposit a sizeable sum in a bank, of which, the capital must be in the boy's name, while the interest would be paid to the mother. Ernst had little choice but to pretend to agree to all this. The next day Pauline received a document, which was followed by a visit from Ernst and Constantine. This document embodied all the conditions set forth by Grand Duke Constantine, and he urged her to sign it. If she did, she would gain, not only the capital-and-interest banking arrangement, but also payment of all her debts, and additional money for immediate needs. Once again, the document would be conditional upon her leaving the city at once. She agreed, and selected Vienna as her next base of operations.⁶⁹

On the day following, Pauline, her son, and Baron Fichler, an escort provided by the Grand Duke of Saxe-Coburg, began the journey to Vienna by coach. As it became dark that evening Pauline and her son fell asleep in the swaying coach, only to be awakened violently as the coach plunged to the bottom of a ravine. Pauline and her son both came through the fall alive, and according to Pauline, she looked up to find Baron Fichler and the coachman, who had engineered the whole fall, looking down at her.⁷⁰

According to her own account, the spurious Madame Alexander then assumed an attitude of command which enabled her to cow her erstwhile murderers into hauling her and her son to the village inn where their

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid.

minor wounds were treated, after which, they all climbed back into a coach and were taken to the Baron's home. Here, they were, for all practical purposes, prisoners for eight days. During this tense period, Pauline refused to eat, or to allow her son to eat, from any dish that was not shared by her hosts.⁷¹

Apparently, her worst fears were justified, for on one occasion when her wine was poured from a new bottle, she offered it to the Baron's young son, only to have his mother dash the glass from his hand. This tactic put Pauline into her dominant mood again, so she invented a large and anxious family who were anxiously awaiting her arrival in Vienna. Among these relatives, she claimed, was a sister who was married to a prominent official. This story caused the Baron to see her off at once with a gift of a hundred florins.⁷²

When she finally reached Vienna, Pauline took rooms at the "Royal Emperor," but soon found that she would not be living in exactly the style that she expected. When she took the letter that Ernst had given her to the banker Stamitz, she discovered that it was a ruse. There was no money to be forthcoming at all, the letter was never intended for delivery.⁷³

Once again Pauline found herself in her familiar, desperate plight. Luckily, she chanced upon what seems by now to have become her

⁷¹Redman, House of Hanover, p. 198-199.

⁷²Ibid., p. 199.

⁷³Ibid.

habitual way out: she was befriended by a retired general. As it turned out, it was the same retired general who had befriended her in Wilhelmsbad. Now he served as an intermediary, for he proceeded to introduce her to the aged Prince de Ligne. When de Ligne heard her tale of misfortunes he assumed the role of protector. As if by magic, the doors of the Vienna aristocracy now opened to Pauline Panam.⁷⁴

While Pauline was moving upwards in the social circles of Vienna, the Coburg Princes were concerning themselves in the councils of Europe. Prince Leopold, in his characteristic third person style, wrote an account of these happenings some years later. Here is his own account of the months preceding the Congress of Vienna in 1814:

In December a great part of the allied army took the direction of Switzerland. The Grand Duke Constantine and Prince Leopold paid a second and longer visit at Amorbach. The Duke remained at Frankfort to take command of a German corps d'observation which was to blockade, and, if possible, to take Mayence where a considerable French force had remained. The Prince Ferdinand, after some demonstrations against Mayence, went with the Austrian army to Switzerland, and afterwards to Franche Comté, in Eastern France, where he remained. The great headquarters of the Emperor of Russia and the King of Prussia occupied Bale on the 12th of January 1814. The Grand Duke Constantine went with Prince Leopold to Elfenau, near Berne, the residence of the Grand Duchess Anna Feodorowna. His ardent wish was a reconciliation. Unfortunately it did not take place. The great army struggled on in France; political difficulties preventing it going on after the battle of Brienna, on the 2nd of February, to Paris, which might easily have been done. Only on the 30th March the attack of Paris took place. On the 31st the allied army entered Paris. Prince Leopold entered it at the head of the cavalry he commanded, and remained at Paris: The Duke, after an armistice with Mayence, settled its evacuation by the French, and came there also. In the middle of June the Duke went to Germany--Prince Ferdinand also. Prince Leopold accompanied the Emperor Alexander to England. The events

⁷⁴Ibid.

which took place then are known. The Duke and Duchess of York were most kindly, so was the Duke of Kent. The Regent was much irritated, first, by Princess Charlotte refusing the Prince of Orange; afterwards by her flight to her mother. The majority of the public were favorable to Prince Leopold--even Ministers--particularly the Wellesley family, Lord Castlereagh, etc.

At the end of July, Prince Leopold left London. Before that he was graciously received by the Regent, who had verified that no unfair intrigue had taken place. He appeared at a splendid ball at Carlton House, which closed the season, and where he received demonstrations of kindness from the whole family. The Prince opened the ball with Princess Mary, not yet Duchess of Gloucester.

The Duke of Sussex and the young Duke of Gloucester were not at that time received by the Regent or his Ministers. Prince Leopold went through Holland to Amorbach, where the Prince of Leiningen had died unexpectedly. He assisted the Princess to settle her guardianship. The three brothers met at Amorbach, and afterwards at Coburg.

At the end of August the Duke and Prince Ferdinand went to Vienna, where the Congress had begun its sittings. Prince Leopold, who had remained with his beloved mother, joined them towards the end of September. The Duke entrusted a good deal of the management of what he hoped to obtain to Prince Leopold.⁷⁵

The Coburgs did not do badly at the Congress. They were recognized, with full status, as sovereign princes in the German Confederation. The Saxon duchies, together, would send a representative to the Diet of Frankfort.⁷⁶

One of those who was able to enjoy the festive atmosphere of the Congress of Vienna was Pauline Panam. Under the sponsorship of her patron, Prince de Ligne, she had the entrée to prominent social orders.⁷⁷

⁷⁵Leopold I, King of the Belgians, Reminiscences of King Leopold, 1862, pagination not given, quoted in Redman, House of Hanover, pp. 202-204.

⁷⁶Benson and Esher, eds., Letters of Queen Victoria, I, 2.

⁷⁷Redman, House of Hanover, p. 204.

One thing that this led to was her chance to see Grand Duke Ernst again. Pauline and her current prince were sitting in the Prater one day when Austria's Emperor, Franz, drove by with his Empress. With the Emperor's carriage came a group of horsemen, and one of these was Duke Ernst.⁷⁸

Not long afterwards Ernst called upon Pauline. He hoped to hush up the damning spate of gossip about Pauline's near-death while enroute to Vienna. He tried to explain away the whole thing as a mere accident.⁷⁹ It seems that Grand Duke Ernst, because of the carriage-wreck story, and also because of his unpredictable temper, was becoming something of an embarrassment to his two more circumspect brothers. His reputation threatened the success of their plans. These plans were on a scale worthy of the Coburgs. Prince Ferdinand expected to marry a wealthy Hungarian, the Princess Kohary. Prince Leopold was aiming even higher, for he hoped to become the husband of none other than Charlotte, the future Queen of England. Subtle and suave, Prince Leopold could outcharm even another Coburg. After all, he had convinced Grand Duke Ernst that he, Leopold, should control the Coburg affairs.⁸⁰

If things seemed about to look up for the Coburg princes, the reverse was true for Pauline Panam. Her friend, Prince de Ligne, became very ill and soon died. Almost at the same time Ferdinand and Leopold were making progress with their plans.⁸¹

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 205.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 206.

As Leopold recalled it:

During the Congress Prince Ferdinand gained the heart of the blooming heiress of Kohary. The Duke of Wellington and Lord Castlereagh, and all the English, showed a marked kindness to Prince Leopold. The Duke of Kent was so kind as to favour some communication with Princess Charlotte, who expressed her determination to remain firm in her plans. I forgot to mention a subject which has since been told as a proof of the great poverty of Prince Leopold when he was in England in 1814. He came with the Emperor Alexander, and as long as the Emperor remained himself in England, the lodgings of the persons who had come with him were paid by him. . . . The Prince had nothing to do with the choice of that lodging, and as soon as the Emperor had left, he lodged himself in Stratford Place, in a house where General Count Beroldingen, the Württembourg Minister, lodged, and where he remained till he left London. He might have explained these things before, but he had not thought it worth while.⁸²

However, the fortunes of the Coburg Princes were not to be advanced without some degree of anxiety. When Napoleon left Elba the reports of his progress terrified the Coburgs, and they left Vienna. Fortunately for them, the news of the triumph of the allies at Waterloo followed soon after, and the era of Bonaparte ended for good and all.⁸³

The next year Leopold was in Berlin when he received a letter from the Regent of England which invited him back to that country. There was, at the same time, a letter from Lord Castlereagh, whom Leopold had become acquainted with during the Congress of Vienna. By February 21st Leopold was in Dover, and two days later he was at the Pavilion at Brighton. In another four days Princess Charlotte, the Queen, and two of the other princesses were also in residence.⁸⁴

⁸²Leopold I, King of the Belgians, Reminiscences of King Leopold, 1862, pagination not given, quoted in Redman, House of Hanover, p. 206.

⁸³Redman, House of Hanover, pp. 208-209.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 210.

Charlotte and Leopold were answers to each other's prayers. His ambition and her desire to escape family domination could both be gratified by their marriage. In addition, both were youthful and good-looking and they straightaway fell in love.⁸⁵

A wedding date was set for the 2nd of May. Until that time Leopold stayed as a guest at Clarence House, at which place his most constant function was to appear on the balcony for appraisal by the Londoners. As usual, the Coburg looks, dignity, and nobility of bearing passed all tests. The future Queen had her Prince Charming.⁸⁶

The wedding took place at Carlton House, followed by a honeymoon, and further Coburg influences. Leopold brought into the new household at Claremont a Coburg physician, Baron Christian Frederich von Stockmar, a man who would serve the Coburg cause through Leopold, Albert, and Victoria for many years to come. Stockmar was born in 1787.⁸⁷ He was only three years older than Leopold, whom he had met in Coburg, but Leopold was much impressed with the ability of this son of a local magistrate.⁸⁸ From 1816 forward Stockmar was to be a great help to Leopold.⁸⁹

Nor had Prince Ferdinand been idle. He wound up his courtship of Princess Kohary successfully, and they were married in 1816. This

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 15.

⁸⁸Redman, House of Hanover, p. 211.

⁸⁹Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 15.

greatly pleased the old Dowager Grand Duchess of Coburg, who could now see her offspring beginning to come into the estate to which her affection and sense of duty had long since dedicated them. Needless to say, Leopold's marriage to Charlotte was an even greater delight to her. Leopold, had been her favorite son, the greatest center for her affections, and now he was linked to the future Queen of England, and he had been granted £50,000 a year in his own right.⁹⁰

Ernst was still looking for an heiress. He blamed his inability to do his duty on the hapless Pauline Panam. Always she was held up as his victim. His own rôle as villain seemed to have doomed his chances of ever capturing the affection of a worthy bride.⁹¹

At last, the Grand Duke of Coburg decided to abduct Pauline's son so that he might be held hostage until such time as Pauline would agree to enter a convent--and oblivion. His plan did not go through, and, as an alternative, he demanded custody of his son. When Pauline refused, he once again cut off her income. As usual, Pauline had someone to turn to; she secured more money from Grand Duke Constantine.⁹²

By this time Prince Ferdinand was becoming out of patience with the continuous tirade against his brother. He decided to take steps on his own. He was able to persuade Prince Metternich to intervene in the affair. Metternich had Pauline brought to see him, and during the audience he offered to assume the care of her son. The leader of Austria

⁹⁰Redman, House of Hanover, p. 246.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid.

suggested that he would be responsible for the boy's safety. He went further, saying that the boy would be sent to college and given an ample allowance. Metternich indicated that Pauline should receive at least six times the amount Ernst had been paying her. The younger Ernst was to have a personal income of ~~five~~ fifteen thousand francs, a title, and the Saxe-Coburg name. In short, Metternich would legitimize him.⁹³

As he warmed to his theme, Metternich said that he would pave the boy's way through life, and that the boy would enjoy the title of count. Pauline was dubious; she said that she was still afraid Grand Duke Ernst would harm her son. Metternich protested to the contrary, and told Pauline that she would have regular access to her son. At the end he said:

Such are my offers. Will you accept them? Refuse and the Prince will wholly abandon you. I do not wish to press you; reflect well: you certainly cannot entertain an idea that I am leagued with the Duke to cause your son's assassination?⁹⁴

Pauline left Metternich still afraid and uncertain. The next day she delivered her acceptance in person. Metternich was pleased:

All will terminate much better than you suppose. But now that I am on the point of entering into the negotiations, pledge me your word of honour that you will give no further publicity to your tale; I extract this from you. In all the elevated societies nothing is talked of but your history; the Duke incessantly reproaches our police; and you have forwarded a Memoir to Archduke Regnier, wherein there are very strong passages.⁹⁵

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 247.

⁹⁵Ibid.

Metternich received Pauline's word that she would suffer in silence. Then, once again, Fate countermanded the plans. An event occurred that put a stop to the negotiations. Grand Duke Ernst found a bride.⁹⁶

Ernst was married on the first day of July, 1817 to his distant relation, Princess Louise, only child and heiress of Grand Duke Augustus of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg.⁹⁷ Princess Louise's mother was Grand Duke Augustus' first wife, the Princess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin.⁹⁸ This shy and melancholic girl of sixteen was the last of the old Gotha line. For the wedding, her father presented one thousand loaves of bread to the poor. Louise was driven across the border into Saxe-Coburg.⁹⁹

The new bride and groom were greeted by the old Grand Duchess, whose display of affection knew no bounds. She threw her arms around her son, and said loudly to Louise: "Ich wünsche dass der kleine Ernst, dir so gut ein werden möge, du mir einer geworden bist." Among the less effusive family members present was Grand Duke Ernst's widowed sister, the Princess Victoria of Saxe-Leiningen. One might be excused for wondering if the dim figure of Destiny did not also lurk in the noisy crowd, for one generation hence the offspring of these two branches of the House of Saxe-Coburg would stand mated in the shadow of the greatest throne in the world.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Grey, Early Years, p. 29.

⁹⁹Redman, House of Hanover, p. 247.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 248.

So Ernst had done his duty, and no matter how highly he might be esteemed in the gushing affection of the Duchess Augusta, he was not a good husband, and he did not cease from his sexual adventures.¹⁰¹ In later years it was conjectured that Prince Albert's servant, Löhlein, was in reality his half-brother, one of the bastard sons of Grand Duke Ernst I. Whether or not this was true, Victoria's secretary, Ponsonby, was always impressed by the close physical resemblance between Prince Albert and Löhlein.¹⁰²

Likewise, the new reigning Duchess Louise, a spoiled child, sought love elsewhere when neglected by her philandering husband. One name closely linked with hers was that of Baron von Meyern, the Court Chamberlain. He was a cultured, older man of Jewish background. Their affair later led to the opinion, expressed in numerous books and documents, that Baron von Meyern was the real father of Prince Albert.¹⁰³ This story was believed by many members of Victoria's court, and it was supported by the striking dissimilarity, in character as well as in appearance, between Albert and the two Ernsts. Both Ernsts had very black hair, while Albert was very fair.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Elizabeth (Pakenham), Countess Longford, Queen Victoria: Born to Succeed (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 338. Hereafter cited as Victoria: Born to Succeed.

¹⁰³Redman, House of Hanover, p. 248.

¹⁰⁴Longford, Victoria: Born to Succeed, p. 129.

It was inevitable that Ernst and Louise, these two incompatible amorous adventurers, should part. In March of 1826 they were divorced.¹⁰⁵ Ernst divorced his wife on the grounds of adultery with Lieutenant von Hanstein, after which Louise and von Hanstein were married.¹⁰⁶ Previous to that time a separation had already taken place in 1824. When the Grand Duchess Louise left Coburg she was never to see her two sons, Ernst II and Albert, again. She died in 1831 at St. Wendel, Switzerland, after a long, painful ~~siege~~ of illness, when she was only thirty-two.¹⁰⁷

The new Dowager Duchess of Gotha was the second wife of Grand Duke Augustus, Princess Caroline of Hesse-Cassel, daughter of William, the ninth Elector of Hesse, and of Wilhelmina of Denmark.¹⁰⁸ She was Louise's stepmother, and she wrote this account of her to the Duke on July 27th, 1831:

The sad state of my poor Louise bows me to the earth. . . . The thought that her children had quite forgotten her distressed her very much. She wished to know if they ever spoke of her. I answered her that they were far too good to forget her; that they did not know of her sufferings, as it would grieve the good children too much.¹⁰⁹

By the autumn of 1832, six months after his wife's death, Duke Ernst performed his duty a second time. He married his own niece, Princess Mary of Württemberg, who was the daughter of his sister, Antoinette,

¹⁰⁵Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 5.

¹⁰⁶E. F. Benson, Edward VII, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 5-6.

¹⁰⁸Grey, Early Years, p. 29.

¹⁰⁹From a Memorandum written by Queen Victoria, 1864, quoted in Redman, House of Hanover, p. 248-249.

who had become the wife of Duke Alexander of Württemberg, whose sister was Tsarina Maria of Russia.¹¹⁰

Yet still that perpetual martyr, Pauline Panam, stayed on in Vienna in the hope that Metternich would finish negotiations in reference to Ernst's illegitimate son. Her requests for information came to nothing. At last, she gave up the fight and went back to Paris, where she hoped to find new ways to press her claims.¹¹¹ Pauline now sent off a letter to Ernst in which she made the threat that she would publish her memoirs. These papers, she said, were in the hands of the King's Notary at Paris, along with incriminating letters written by the Duke. Once again, she demanded that suitable arrangements be made for their son's future.¹¹²

This letter led to another weary period of negotiations. At first these negotiations were carried on by M. Javon, who was the agent of the Coburg Court in Paris. When he was unable to clear things up, the Duc de Richelieu was persuaded to act for Duke Ernst. There was, however, still no agreement. In the last recorded mention of her, Pauline sold her memoirs for publication. This was in 1823. Much interest was exhibited in France, but publication was suppressed in Germany. After that date Pauline Panam and her son disappear from records of the period.¹¹³

Ernst I had embroiled the Coburg name in a long-draw-out scandal, and he had not made marriages whose brilliance could match those of his

¹¹⁰Grey, Early Years, p. 87.

¹¹¹Redman, House of Hanover, p. 249.

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Ibid.

brothers, and yet, despite this, the fortunes of the home duchy were advanced during his reign. The last male descendant of Frederick, the Grand Duke of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg, who was the son of Ernst the Pious, was Frederick IV.¹¹⁴ Frederick IV had inherited this duchy in 1822 from his brother, Augustus, who was the father of Ernst's wife, Louise.¹¹⁵ When the greater family of the Saxon duchies realized that Frederick was almost certain to die without a direct male heir they proceeded to work out an arrangement to re-shuffle the various duchies within the family. This agreement was conceived in 1825 and confirmed in November of 1826. It added the duchy of Gotha to Saxe-Coburg. However, the duchy of Saalfeld was passed over to the Grand Duke of Saxe-Meiningen. At the same time Saxe-Altenburg was detached from the duchy of Gotha, and presented to the Grand Duke of Saxe-Hildburghausen. The Grand Duke of Saxe-Hildburghausen then changed his title to Grand Duke of Saxe-Altenburg. Meanwhile, Hildburghausen, itself, was annexed by the Grand Duke of Saxe-Meiningen.¹¹⁶

A direct witness to this game of ducal musical chairs was Ernst's mother, who, in a letter, wrote of it:

By the death, in 1825, without issue male, of Frederick IV, Duke of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg, the direct succession of the Gotha-Altenburg branch of the Ernestine line came to an end, and the inheritance passed to other branches of the same line. After much delay, owing chiefly to the exorbitant pretensions of the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, it was finally settled, that, in consideration of the acquiring of the duchy of Gotha, the Duke of Coburg should cede that of Saalfeld to the Duke of Meiningen, Hildburghausen being also added to the inheritance of the latter

¹¹⁴Grey, Early Years, p. 27.

¹¹⁵Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 8.

¹¹⁶Grey, Early Years, p. 27.

duke; the Duke of Hildburghausen receiving in exchange the duchy of Saxe-Altenburg, and assuming that title.

Augusta, Dowager Duchess of Coburg
from Ketschendorf on 30 May, 1826.¹¹⁷

In a second, undated, letter the Dowager Grand Duchess Augusta said:

Ernst is very busy just now as the Saxon Commissioners are here to settle about the inheritance. It will be a difficult task, as the Duke of Meiningen and old K _____ are very obstinate. General M _____ is a good and sensible man, who would like to make all straight, and fears he will have to return to Dresden without any thing having been settled. He went first to Hildburghausen, taking with him the ultimatum of the old Duke of Meiningen, who is the senior of the Ernestine line. the ultimatum was to the effect that the duke would enter into no agreement except:

1. That he should retain all his possessions, besides acquiring Hildburghausen, Coburg, and Saalfeld; that he should be the only Duke of Coburg, founding a new duchy of Coburg.

2. Ernst to have Gotha (Hildburghausen, Altenburg), and to give up the name which your great uncle and your brothers made so celebrated! S _____ is gone to Meiningen with the answer that Ernst will neither give up Coburg nor the name of his family.¹¹⁸

The Dowager Grand Duchess of old Gotha also had strong feelings on the shuffling about of the duchies and the end of the Gotha line. Her letter is worth looking at at this point. One must remember that she is the step-mother of Ernst of Saxe-Coburg's first wife, Louise:

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 54.

¹¹⁸Ibid., pp. 54-55.

Written from Rumpenheim, 5 September, 1826.

I need not tell you that I thanked God when I heard that the duchy of Gotha had become yours. It was a great comfort to me, for there is no one in whom I have more confidence than in yourself, my dear duke. But you must also feel and know that this event opens afresh many wounds. The division of the beloved land, to which it was my happiness to be a mother, naturally grieves me. Yet, my dear duke, I love you, your precious children, and the dear country too well not to keep my heart open to my beloved people of Gotha; and whenever it may be in my power to help these faithful subjects by word or deed, or by intercession for them with their kind sovereign, I will do so as long as God shall spare me.

I am convinced that you, my dear friend, will do all in your power to make your new subjects happy. Their prosperity is now entrusted to you. I shall hope for the pleasure of seeing you and the dear children often at Gotha. Surely when you come for the first time, you intend to bring these darlings with you to gratify us all.¹¹⁹

This did not all come about until November, but at that time, ratification of the family convention was completed and Gotha was Ernst's. Towards the year's end Ernst, his duchess, and their sons made a formal entry into Gotha, and took possession of this new inheritance.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹Ibid., pp. 55-57.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 57.

II. THE FIRST GREAT MARRIAGE

And so, with Ernst settled securely on the ancient family seat, with two wives, two sons, and a new province, we must again turn our attention to his youngest brother, Prince Leopold.

It is only fair that we should now look much more closely at the prince who has been largely a peripheral figure in the Coburg saga up to this point, for he now assumes the center of the stage. He was the first Coburg to become a king in his own right, and he was to play an influential rôle in the lives of the next generation of Coburgs.

Leopold was a good way down the line as far as seniority in Coburg went, for he was the eighth child and only the third son, but that does not mean that he was at all slighted in inheriting the Coburg qualities. He possessed a good measure of the intellect, the charm, and the good looks that carried so many Coburgs so far.

In Defiant Dynasty, a history of the Royal House of Belgium, Theo Aronson attributes a great deal of Leopold's success to his looks. In fact, "by the time he had reached manhood. . .there were few young men as handsome as he." His looks drew every eye. If someone was needed to portray the god Jupiter in a tableau vivant it was always Prince Leopold who was chosen. Napoleon, who saw a great many of the "beautiful people" of his day was to remember Leopold as the handsomest young man he ever saw at the Tuileries.¹

¹Theo Aronson, Defiant Dynasty: The Coburgs of Belgium (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1968) p. xiii. Hereafter cited as Defiant Dynasty.

Leopold's Louie Howe, Baron Stockmar, wrote:

He was one of the handsomest men of his day, with the utmost charm of manners, which, however, never allowed the Prince to be forgotten in him. . . .those in more immediate contact with him were captivated by the charm of a thoroughly original personality.

The combination of great knowledge of the world with the finest tact and self-possession in his way of dealing with men and things, intellect, knowledge, imagination, benevolence, humor, and kindly irony, and added to this, the charm and urbanity of his manner, made the Prince infinitely attractive.²

Leopold, himself, was fully aware that his Coburg good looks were a great asset. Yet he was no vain fool, no self-loving peacock. He was a shrewd opportunist and planner who never left an asset unused. He was only seventeen when, in 1807, he had gone to Paris with his brother, Ernst, but he had been able to fascinate two very important women. Both the Empress Josephine and her daughter Hortense found him captivating. It was, in fact, rumored that Hortense had seduced Leopold. Whether or not this was true, Leopold was most careful not to closely associate himself with Napoleon. At one point the canny Leopold managed to wheedle Napoleon into promising to enlarge Coburg, yet Leopold had not, in return pledged allegiance to the French Emperor. It will be remembered that, in the end, Leopold served with the Russian army against Napoleon.³ On the 31st of March, 1814, Leopold, now a lieutenant-general of Marie Feodorovna's cuirassiers rode into Paris with the victorious allied armies.⁴

²F. Max Müller, ed., Memoirs of Baron [Christian Friedrich] Stockmar, his memoirs as assembled from his papers by his son, Baron E [rnst Alfred Christian] von Stockmar (2 vols.; London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1872), I, 36. Hereafter cited as Memoirs of Baron Stockmar.

³Aronson, Defiant Dynasty, p. xiv.

⁴Ibid., p. 127.

Two months later the Coburg prince was in London with the Tsar where, as we have seen, he met the only child of the Prince Regent of England. Here was an opportunity truly worthy of the Coburg canniness and charm! Leopold's ambition would not stick at assuming the rôle of consort to the Queen of England! In his favor from the start was the fact that he came to England free of any sort of dynastic entanglements. It was only a few short days after their meeting that Princess Charlotte broke her engagement to the Prince of Orange.⁵

However, it was not because of Leopold that the Princess had broken her engagement. Charlotte, who was attractive and high-spirited, had never really cared much for her fiancé, and now she fell in love with a Prussian Prince. This affair proved abortive, but it left matters wide open for Leopold. Leopold was ready and willing, and Charlotte had a further motive--she sought a measure of freedom from her father's domination. Charlotte made up her mind that Leopold was her answer, and did not rest until the matter was settled. So it was that, with some hesitation, the Regent gave his permission and Charlotte and Leopold were married in 1816.⁶ Leopold assumed British nationality.⁷ Independence and ambition had met, married, and been realized. An unexpected bonus followed--they actually fell in love.⁸

In assessing Leopold's later career and character development it

⁵Ibid., p. xiv.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Vernon Mallinson, Belgium, Nations of the World, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), p. 38.

⁸Aronson, Defiant Dynasty, p. xiv.

is necessary to realize that this brief marriage idyll was the one fully happy time in his life. Charlotte and Leopold turned out to have a most complementary chemistry of personalities. She was a vivid, active, almost brash soul who served as a balance for the dutiful, conscientious side of his Coburg character. Leopold's career as it developed afterwards was largely a matter of compensation for the loss he was to suffer.⁹

Although Leopold's love for Charlotte was now sincere, and she, on her part, adored him, this does not mean that his ambition had been quenched or that he had ceased to dream of the day when she would be Queen. Charlotte had already expressed her full willingness to share her future crown. In a ringing statement that echoes down the corridors of time, past Victoria and Edward VIII, she said, "I will not and cannot reign over England except upon the condition that he shall reign over England and myself. . . ." She told Madame de Boigne, "Yes, he shall be King or I will never be Queen." Tragically, prophetically, she was right. Their hope would only live as a reflection later; they were to be not a fact, but a foreshadowing.¹⁰

In the spring of 1817 Charlotte, already the victim of two miscarriages, was again expecting a child. Her labor began several weeks later than expected, and during those weeks she was treated by bleeding and dieting. On November 5 her male child was stillborn, and within six

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. xv.

hours she was dead herself.¹¹ The Princess died with her hand clasped in that of Leopold's faithful friend and advisor, Doctor Stockmar, and it was he who had to break the news to the Prince.¹² In that one evening Prince Leopold saw pass away his wife, his heir, his chance of a throne, and much of his capacity to feel deeply. Some years later he told his niece, Queen Victoria, that he was never again able to recapture "the feeling of happiness" that he had known during his brief first marriage.¹³

Leopold now turned his energies in other directions. Aside from continuing his efforts on his own career, he became a strategist, a manoeuvrer in the councils of the Coburg family. In years to come Bismarck would refer to the House of Coburg as "the stud farm of Europe." Coburgs would marry into almost every royal family in Europe, and this would come about, largely through the encouragement and the example of Leopold, who having lost affection, now devoted himself to duty.¹⁴

Thus far the Coburgs had not really been able to carry off and then sustain a brilliant royal marriage. Ernst had been able to add Gotha to the home territory partly because of his first marriage, but

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 15.

¹³Aronson, Defiant Dynasty, p. xvi.

¹⁴Ibid. Cf. Henry Reeve, ed.; C. C. Greville's Journals of the Reigns of George IV and William IV, by Charles C. F. Greville (3 vols.; London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1875), I, p. 22. Hereafter cited as Greville Memoirs, George IV and William IV. Greville describes Leopold at this time as being "very dull and heavy" and "overcome with the weight of his own dignity." Greville foresaw no success for Leopold in England.

Coburg was still small and insignificant. Julie's marriage to Grand Duke Constantine had failed, and Leopold's to Charlotte had ended tragically. Where next to turn?¹⁵

In his planning Leopold had the good fortune to have the faithful Doctor Stockmar as his constant advisor. In the years ahead he would do great service to the Coburg cause.¹⁶

In the meantime, Charlotte's untimely death had great repercussions within the British Royal Family. As long as she was alive it had naturally been supposed that the Crown would descend from the incapacitated George III to Charlotte's father, the Regent; and so, at last, to her and her heirs. Her death changed all that, and once again the brothers of the Prince Regent became important to the succession. They scarcely seemed a promising lot. Yet, the heir to the throne must come from them, for Parliament would not agree to a divorce for the Regent and his highly eccentric wife, Caroline, in order that he might remarry and produce an heir. Therefore, with no particular enthusiasm, the Dukes of Clarence, Kent, and Cambridge, already advancing into middle age, were called upon to do their marital duty. There were a good number of suitable Protestant princesses available; it became a matter of trying to select the best. The fifty-three-year-old Duke of Clarence took Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen (a distant Coburg relation); the Duke of Kent, who was fifty-one, selected the widowed Princess of

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

Leiningen (who was, of course, Victoria of Coburg); and the Duke of Cambridge, age forty-four, took Augusta of Hesse-Cassel.¹⁷

Needless to say, the second of these marriages was most pleasing to Prince Leopold. Leopold had been using his influence to bring about this match even before Charlotte's death. Now, of course, it was even more important, for his sister might be able to produce an heir to the English throne even if he could not. The Dukes of Clarence and Kent had been married in a double ceremony July 11, 1818. Symbolic of Leopold's influence was the fact that the Duke and Duchess of Kent spent their honeymoon and their first year of married life at Claremont, Leopold's home.¹⁸

Now things began to look up once again for Prince Leopold. A daughter, Victoria, was born to the Kents in May of 1819. Leopold had been abroad at the time of Princess Victoria's birth, but he hurried home in order to be present at her christening at Kensington Palace. Within one year of that date the Duke of Kent and George III were both dead. Victoria was two steps nearer the throne. The Prince Regent became George IV, and the Duke of Clarence was still without children. It seemed most unlikely that either the new king or his heir would live the seventeen years necessary to bring Princess Victoria to her majority. If the Princess should come to the throne before coming of age, there seemed a good chance that Prince Leopold might become her regent. After

¹⁷Ibid., pp. xvi-xvii.

¹⁸Ibid., p. xvii.

all, Leopold had youth, popularity, and respectability, while the Hanoverian royal dukes had the exact reverse of those qualities.¹⁹

Leopold was already a sort of second father to Princess Victoria. When Victoria's father, the Duke of Kent, died on January 23, 1820, only eight months after his daughter's birth, Leopold had assumed a great measure of responsibility for his widowed sister and her child. Until this happened, Leopold had not been able to face his little niece because she reminded him too painfully of his own tragedy. Now, he proceeded to fulfill the second father rôle with a great sense of duty and affection.²⁰ Leopold was to act as Victoria's guardian for some eleven years. In Victoria's mind he became so firmly established as a father-figure that she constantly alluded to him as "il mio secondo padre, il mio solo padre."²¹

Little Victoria was a center of great hopes for her relations in Saxe-Coburg. Before she was ever looked upon as the future Queen, the idea that she should one day marry one of her Coburg cousins was firmly held within the family. Prince Albert's nurse would talk to him playfully of his future bride in England when he was only three years old.²²

During the years that might lie between, Leopold was inclined to lay low. He dared not show his hand too openly, for George IV could no

¹⁹Ibid., pp. xvii-xviii.

²⁰Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 14.

²¹Mallinson, Belgium, p. 58.

²²Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 14.

longer stand the sight of him. Leopold had long practiced circumspection; now he would be even more so. In the years after Charlotte's death he became as well known for his discretion as for his Coburg good looks. This period saw an intensification of his already established character traits. His prudence, good manners, and display of knowledge were honed and sharpened almost to the point of real offensiveness. The charming young officer was seemingly being transformed into a boring, dignified diplomat. Hidden behind an almost dehumanized facade of politesse was his remaining great passion, the will to power. He still kept his home at Claremont, and he continued to accept his allowance from the British government, but he felt it the better part of valor to spend most of his time outside of England. However, he wrote to the Foreign Secretary, "should my presence at home be deemed necessary I should be ready."²³

²³Aronson, Defiant Dynasty, p. xviii.

III. LEOPOLD AND THE GREEK CROWN

Although Leopold was the soul of discretion, he was not, after all, so very unlike his brother, Ernst. It was while he was biding his time, waiting to see what would develop with Princess Victoria, that Leopold became involved in an affair of his own. There was no shortage of attractive women available to bring Leopold comfort in his loneliness, yet, in the main, their overtures failed to interest him. However, in the autumn of 1828 Leopold attended a performance at the private theatre of the Neues Palais at Potsdam. There he saw a young actress who impersonated a Hottentot in a tiger skin.¹

The next morning the discreet, prudent prince admitted to the actress's mother, "At the very first glance my heart inclined to her, because she looks so wondrously like my departed Charlotte." The girl who was said to be such an echo of Princess Charlotte was a twenty-one-year-old girl named Caroline Bauer. Caroline did look somewhat like the late princess, and she had a similar open and uncomplicated nature. Another factor in her favor was in the fact that she was a cousin of Doctor Stockmar, Leopold's confidential adviser. It would seem that in this case the floodgates of Leopold's prudent reserve broke, for he very promptly made a proposal of morganatic marriage. Young Caroline, swayed by romance and ambition, accepted the proposal. Leopold, Caroline, and, of course, her exulting mother, were soon off for London.²

¹Ibid., pp. xviii-xix.

²Ibid., p. xix.

Leopold settled his little actress in a villa in Regent's Park. Caroline, on her part, was anticipating a blissful, romantic life. Things, however, did not fall out quite as she had expected they would. She was acute enough to perceive that behind his facade of Coburg charm, Leopold was not a particularly exciting man. But now, as she found herself thrown into his company day after day, she discovered that he could be insufferably dull.³

He would arrive at the villa daily, "in stiff, starched state, thickly encased in wrappings and formalities, and wearisome beyond endurance," as she cleverly put it. During their romantic afternoons at home she would generally play the piano or read aloud while he would sit quietly pursuing his hobby, which was drizzling, the practice of reducing to powder the silver or gold threads of tassels, frogging, and epaulets, a popular passtime at that time. Leopold was extremely dedicated to his drizzling box. In fact, during the year in which he was involved with Caroline, the Prince finished enough drizzling for a soup tureen. According to Miss Bauer, the tureen was "solemnly presented to his young niece, the Princess Victoria of Kent."⁴

Be it understood that all this was supposed to constitute courtship; the proposed morganatic marriage had not yet been accomplished. This went on for a month, and at the end of that time the actress and her mother decided to force Leopold's hand. They informed Stockmar that unless Leopold and Caroline were wed at once, they would go home to

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

Germany. This achieved the desired result. A rather farcical ceremony took place on July 2, 1829. Miss Bauer was given the title of Countess Montgomery, and she received a small allowance as well. The marriage apparently had the effect of perking up Leopold a bit. Husband and wife now played billiards, sang duets, and went for a walk in the evening twilight.⁵

Later, Caroline was to write of this time:

I am inclined to believe that these brief weeks in July dated the last expiring flush of romance in the life of the prince. It was the last youthful flicker of his burnt-out heart before it finally crumbled for ever into cold ashes.⁶

Such a state of things, by its own nature, could not last. By the end of the month health-obsessed Leopold was off to Karlsbad to take the water cure. When next Caroline saw him he was at his drizzling again. This was in Paris in the month of November, but they did not remain long in that romantic city. Instead, they went back to foggy England, to a "lonely, desolate and mournful villa near Claremont House," as Caroline put it. Here, one dreary day followed another. Caroline and her still-present mother grew depressed in this atmosphere. When the summer of 1830 came Caroline felt she could endure no more. She felt she had wasted a good two years of her life on this unstimulating prince, who was so consistently preoccupied with his drizzling box. Finally, she erupted into a blind, name-calling rage that killed their

⁵Ibid., pp. xix-xx.

⁶Ibid., p. xx.

relationship once and for all. Taking her loyal, patient mother in tow, Caroline left for the Continent, never to see her prince again.⁷

Leopold was now thirty-nine. He still had not achieved a throne. George IV and his heir presumptive, the Duke of Clarence were alive still.⁸ Clarence, in fact, had had two daughters, but both children had died in infancy. Still, for some time there had been some speculation that he might have heirs to succeed him.⁹ In just seven years Princess Victoria would be of age, with no further need for a regent. It began to look as though Leopold was going to have to find his opportunity elsewhere. Fate now came forward to tantalize the canny but cautious prince with a pig in a poke.¹⁰

In February of 1830 the sick hand of the Sublime Porte at last fell away from Greece. Greece was recognized as being an independent, sovereign state. The sovereign, however, was not in evidence. The Greeks were going to have to import a prince, and hope that a new royal family tree would grow in their rocky land. Even before Greece gained full and acknowledged independence the name of Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg had been considered as a possible ruler. With independence he became the official candidate of England. At the time Charles Greville wrote:

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. xxi.

⁹Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 13.

¹⁰Aronson, Defiant Dynasty, p. xxi.

Leopold's election to the throne of Greece seems to be settled, and while everyone has been wondering what could induce him to accept it, it turns out that he has been most anxious for it, and has moved heaven and earth to obtain it¹¹

Why? Why did this prince who had become so cautious show an interest in this wild, unsettled Balkan Country? One might say it was because it seemed to be the destiny of Leopold to be a sort of fore-runner, almost in the theological-Biblical sense, of events that would later come to pass. The marriage of Leopold and Charlotte, although it came to tragedy, very closely forecast the later marriage of Albert and Victoria. Now Leopold was the first Coburg to flirt with a Balkan throne, a circumstance that would later be fulfilled when Ferdinand accepted the throne of Bulgaria.

At any rate, it would seem that the possibility of the Greek throne appealed to Leopold's imagination. Stockmar claims that the idea of rebuilding and restoring the Kingdom of the Hellenes to its vanished glory touched "a certain vein of fancy and romance in his character." It would seem that not all the romance had vanished from Leopold's heart after all. If he did not respond to a person, he could at least respond to a dream.¹²

Leopold began a confidential correspondence with Count Capodistrios, who was the President of the Provisional Government of Greece. With his faithful Stockmar, the Prince studied all the books that he

¹¹Reeve, Greville Memoirs, George IV and William IV, I, 265.

¹²Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, I, lvi

could on the land of Homer and Alexander. At the beginning of all this, Caroline Bauer had still been with Leopold, and she wrote bitterly of the way in which Leopold discussed with her the choice of a future Queen of Greece: "All the princesses of Europe had to pass in review, and were analysed and criticized, in an altogether business-like style."¹³

The crown of Greece was still tantalizingly beyond Leopold's grasp. King George IV did not want Prince Leopold to become a king--not of Greece, or of any other land. When the Duke of Wellington seemed enthusiastic toward his candidature, Leopold began to suspect that this was because the Government was anxious to see him out of England. Then too, he did not like to give up either Claremont House or the £50,000 yearly that he was receiving from Britain. On top of all this, matters in Greece were in a constant state of flux and shift. When Capodistrios told Leopold he would be "leaving your fine palaces for little thatched ones--your sumptuous repasts to eat black bread," he was not quite approximating Leopold's dreams of Greece. Some turbulence might be expected, too, since the territorial ambitions of Greece had not yet been satisfied. All in all, Prince Leopold suffered considerable anxiety over the prospect of taking over such a country and such a situation, and did not firmly commit himself. When Capodistrios urged him on, he hinted that his actual acceptance of the crown would be conditional upon whether the Powers met certain of Greece's demands. This was not forthcoming. Then, Leopold discovered that his election was by no means favored by all elements within Greece, itself. Writing to Baron von Stein he said:

¹³Aronson, Defiant Dynasty, pp. xxi-xxii.

"It may end in a rupture, I care not. On this subject I am consistent with myself." It would seem that perhaps the main accent should fall on that word "myself."¹⁴

Then, once again, Fate stepped in to solve Leopold's dilemma. In the latter part of April, 1830, King George IV became very ill. Leopold's chances for power in England suddenly increased, for if the King should die, only the aging Duke of Clarence stood between Victoria, now aged ten, and the throne. Therefore, in May Leopold penned a letter of renunciation in which he abandoned his hopes for the Greek crown.¹⁵

According to Stockmar, who was always an inside witness, though not an unbiased one, Leopold made his final refusal because of an honest appraisal of the facts. The Prince became convinced that the geographical and political limits that Greece was forced to accept would make it impossible for her to resolve her internal confusion and to steer clear of the strong foreign influences that were partly responsible for her independence.¹⁶ Be that as it may, Leopold's move did not meet with unqualified approval. Baron von Stein now wrote:

Instead of facing difficulties, instead of finishing what he had begun, he withdraws his hand like a coward from the plough, whilst he speculates on the changes which may supervene on the approaching death of George IV.¹⁷

Again, the loyal Stockmar would put quite a different complexion on the whole affair. It must be remembered that Stockmar was the intimate

¹⁴Ibid., p. xxii.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, I, lvi.

¹⁷Aronson, Defiant Dynasty, p. xxii.

advisor of Prince Leopold during the whole time (1829 and 1830) in which the Greek candidature hung fire. Stockmar's son, who compiled his father's memoirs from his personal papers points to the papers laid before the British Parliament (Communications with His Royal Highness Prince Leopold relating to the Sovereignty of Greece, and further communications relating to the Sovereignty of Greece, in the State Papers, Session 1830, vol. xxxii. On p. 322 Stockmar is made Leopold's Charge' d'affaires, on p. 323 Leopold would have the title "Sovereign Prince of Greece," on p. 324, Article 3, Greece is to be monarchical, and hereditary, according to the order of primogeniture.) and to his father's papers to offer a safe basis on which to judge Leopold's actions.¹⁸

The younger Stockmar points out that his father gave "repeated and detailed assurances" to the effect that the possibility of the English Regency was not the motive for the decisions Prince Leopold took. The younger Stockmar then sifts his father's correspondence for 1829 and 1830 with his wife and with his brother-in-law, Opitz, who was later a councillor in Saxe-Coburg.

On November 26, 1829 Stockmar wrote, "the Prince believes in the probability of success, I do not." He wrote, "the thing is probable" on December 18, and again on December 25, and on the following January 2. On February 14, he refers to the Greek crown as "highly probable." On February 25 he wrote, "the Prince does really go to Greece." By March 19, Stockmar is speaking of difficulties which have twice seemed likely to

¹⁸Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, I, 80-81.

ruin the plan. In a letter to Opitz on March 23 Stockmar writes in some detail:

The conditions which the Prince made in accepting the Sovereignty of Greece, meet in their detailed arrangement and application with such difficulties, that he will find himself in the end obliged to give up the whole scheme.¹⁹

The point made by Stockmar's son is that as early as the middle of March, an entire month before George IV fell ill, there was talk of breaking off the Greek negotiations because of practical difficulties. This view of matters would agree with a letter sent by Leopold to Baron Stein on April 10, which was written before the illness of King George IV, in which the prince mentions the possibility of his withdrawal over the question of the boundary and the guaranteed loan.²⁰

In summary, then, Stockmar's view is that Leopold had possibly, at first, underestimated the very real difficulties in internal Greek affairs, not to mention those that might arise as a result of the policy of the Powers. Thus, wrongly informed, he made himself available as a candidate and was supported by the English Ministry. He then found himself in a weak position in regard to the other Powers. In addition, new information came to him from Greece showing that the internal situation was much more difficult than he had suspected, and less likely to find any happy solution. Leopold, therefore, recognized the situation as an impossible one and withdrew, thereby displaying understanding, prudence, and wisdom.²¹

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 115-117.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 117-118.

²¹Ibid., pp. 120-126.

On June 26, 1830 George IV died, and the Duke of Clarence, as William IV, became King of England. William IV shared his late brother's distaste for Prince Leopold. He favored the Duke of Wellington as a potential regent for his niece. There was also some discussion to the effect that the regency, should one become necessary, would go to the new Queen, Adelaide. Leopold and his sister, the Duchess of Kent, now tried to rally support for their cause. The question was settled by the Regency Act which specified that in the event of William IV's death, Queen Adelaide would serve as Regent for any child of her own, but if she had no children, it would then fall to the Duchess of Kent to be Regent until her daughter, Victoria, came of age.²²

Thus, it would seem that Leopold was about to get something very like what he wanted. Yet, being the power behind a regent's throne, especially when the regency might never happen, seemed considerably removed from wearing a crown in one's own right. Yet, Fate was already stepping forward out of the shadows, and this time she held a real crown.²³

²²Aronson, Defiant Dynasty, p. xxiii.

²³Ibid.

IV. LEOPOLD, KING OF THE BELGIANS

Greece was not the only country that was looking for a sovereign in 1830. On November 18th the new nation of Belgium declared its independence. On November 24th Belgium voted to perpetually exclude all members of the House of Nassau.¹ This was followed by formal ratification of independence on January 20, 1831.² By February 7th Belgium had accepted a new constitution. The one thing still wanting was a king.³

There were some within Belgium who opted for a relative of the great Napoleon, the son of Eugène de Beauharnais, Prince Auguste de Leuchtenberg. Others, still reflecting French influence, backed the Duke of Nemours, a son of Louis Philippe.⁴ Yet, these candidates had not actually declared themselves for the position and they were not well-known in Belgium. Aside from that, Leuchtenberg had not yet attained his majority and Nemours was only sixteen and displayed no interest in politics.⁵

On top of all that, Leuchtenberg's family had been viceroys of Italy under Napoleon, and, for that reason, met with the misgivings of worried Belgians. The Congress, therefore, elected the Duke of Nemours, but was informed by Louis Philippe that the House of Orléans could not

¹de Meeiis, History of the Belgians, p. 281.

²Mallinson, Belgium, p. 57.

³de Meeiis, History of the Belgians, p. 281.

⁴Mallinson, Belgium, p. 57.

⁵de Meeiis, History of the Belgians, p. 282.

accept. This was largely because of the application of firm pressure by Palmerston.⁶

This brought on a crises of indecision in Belgium. Intrigue was rife. Many powerful army officers supported the candidacy of the Prince of Orange, which was gaining ground. In an election held February 24, 1831 a Regent was selected. He was Baron Surlet de Choquier. This was followed by a coup d'etat attempt by the Orangists which very nearly succeeded. Insurrections broke out in several cities, and the Regent was forced to act. He dismissed all of his advisors and called upon Nothamb, Antoine Barthélémy, and Joseph Lebeau. Lebeau, who demanded to be in charge of foreign affairs, was strongly in favor of the candidacy of Leopold of Saxe-Coburg. He sent off a representative to London to see what Leopold's attitude would be.⁷

Canny as ever, and, perhaps, burned a bit by the Greek affair, prudent Prince Leopold was interested, but unwilling to compromise himself a second time. He wanted to be assured of the support of the great powers. Britain was willing to see him as a candidate, she would offer no opposition, but he was not to be her official candidate. France was unable to offer any opposition. The Belgian Congress, on June 4, elected Leopold sovereign by an overwhelming majority.⁸

Leopold, however, played his hand for all it was worth. He prudently refused to accept the throne until the government of Belgium had

⁶Mallinson, Belgium, p. 57.

⁷Ibid., pp. 57-58.

⁸Ibid., p. 58.

guaranteed its good faith by signing a peace treaty, made up of eighteen articles, which was drawn up by the great powers. Although this document met with preliminary agreement on June 26, 1831 in London, it provoked a storm of controversy in Belgium. Finally, on July 9, Lebeau managed to win approval by a margin of 126 votes to 70.⁹

This done, Leopold set sail on the royal yacht, Crusader, from Dover to Calais.¹⁰ Behind him he left Doctor Stockmar to settle up his British annuity. Stockmar paid off the outstanding debts and arranged for the annuity henceforth to be handled by trustees. These trustees were to see to the upkeep on Claremont, the salaries and pensions of Leopold's English servants, and certain charities. After these were cared for the rest of the Prince's annuity was to be paid into the public Exchequer.¹¹

As soon as Leopold reached Belgian soil, he met with tumultuous enthusiasm. He even insisted on passing through Ghent, an Orangist baliwick. The Coburg charm was not without its effect.¹²

The deciding factor for the election of Prince Leopold had been the mobilization of the Dutch. Moderates in Belgium, fearing this mobilization, had thrown their weight behind the selection of Prince Leopold. Leopold represented a choice popular with several important

⁹Ibid., p. 59.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, I, 293-305.

¹²Mallinson, Belgium, p. 59.

elements in Europe. He was English by his first marriage and citizenship, he was an old friend of the Tsar and he was acceptable to France.¹³

Leopold made his ceremonial entry into the Belgian capital on July 21, 1831. At last he was a king. A king, however, whose country was in danger, for the Dutch, under William I, attacked at once. It was almost as if some grim revenge were now overtaking Leopold who had married Princess Charlotte after the Prince of Orange lost her. Leopold had later lost her too, and now, at long last, he had a crown for consolation, but it was a crown in peril. In less than two weeks, between August 2 and August 12, the Belgian army was bisected and the new King, Leopold I, nearly captured. Leopold called on France for help, and the French army, in the nick of time, saved Belgium.¹⁴

Upon taking the constitutional oath Leopold had said to the crowd: "I have no other ambition than to see you all happy." This may have been said with sincerity. Perhaps Leopold felt, without meaning it cynically, that what was good for Leopold's position as King was good for Belgium, and perhaps it was. The Belgians called him "Mr. Go-Slowly," and his go-slow approach seemed to place him in control of any situation. The monarchy he built did reign over a Belgium that saw a long period of peace and prosperity.¹⁵

Leopold now set out to organize his new domain. His caninness and caution had seen to it that he would be in a position of strength to do this. His relationships with other royal houses in Europe had led

¹³Ibid., p. 284.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 59-70.

to the offer of this throne, and Leopold, instead of snapping up the proffered position at once, had hung back, allowing the offer to become a pressing one before he condescended to accept it. He had looked very carefully at this offer, after the abortive Greek affair. He had seen one obstacle, the Belgian Constitution. It stipulated that he would be King, not of Belgium, but of the Belgians, and he would have to respect the "sovereignty of the people." However, the Constitution did not give Leopold any hesitation or doubts. He knew that his past experience and his skill could circumvent the written text. Being both planner and opportunist, he would adapt himself to each situation and turn it to best advantage.¹⁶

At forty-one Leopold's Coburg good looks still shone through the patina of maturity. His caninness and charm had been refined and distilled to the point where he had become a master at the art of rejecting proposals while appearing to agree with those who made them. He had not lost the talent for accepting proposals without committing himself, a talent he had already been cultivating when first he met Napoleon.¹⁷

The campaign against the Dutch played right into Leopold's hands, it discredited all of the Belgian leaders. The shadow of disgrace or the strain of treachery threatened the reputation of deputies, ministers, and military officers. Only the new King was uncompromised and left with a free hand. Thus, with the situation and his own skills, Leopold had the chance, which he did not let slip, to set up a special sort of monarchy

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 284-286.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 286.

firmly based, its constitution notwithstanding, on his personal diplomatic prestige and on the mandate he alone held to organize the defense of national integrity.¹⁸

One must acknowledge the brilliance of the way in which Leopold consolidated and maintained his power. He had to work with a constitution that was essentially republican. True, the monarchy had been written into it--but mainly as an afterthought--a figurehead or ornament. This was done for the purpose of winning the sympathy of the older monarchical states of Europe. Under the terms of this constitution the King had no real powers. The King was to select ministers, promulgate the laws, and declare peace or war, but, as it was spelled out on paper, he was just a ceremonial civil servant who could do nothing without the consent of parliament and of the country. "All powers come from the nation," read the basic article of the Constitution. But they had reckoned without canny King Leopold!¹⁹

A closer examination of the Constitution reveals further hedging around the kingship. The Belgian monarchy was hereditary and perpetual, yet, special provisions placed this monarchy in a different sort of matrix. Somewhat in the manner of the modern English Constitution, succession was not simply automatic upon the death of a king. In Belgium's case it would be preceded by a period of interregnum. During this period all authority was in the hands of parliament until such time as the next sovereign had taken the oath before the combined chambers and thus received

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 286-287.

his powers under the Constitution. Thus, at the end of each reign, Belgium returned briefly to the republicanism that ran through its constitutional structure.²⁰

It will be appreciated that Leopold performed quite a feat in bending this unique monarchy to his own style of reign. There was, in the Constitution, an important article whose possible implications had escaped general notice. It was this article that gave Leopold the lever he needed to raise the embedded sceptre. According to the article, the King was to be the head of the army. This had come about because of legislative fears of generals who might incline toward conspiracy. The King was declared to be in supreme command in war or in peace.²¹

Leopold, by assuming the rôle of generalissimo, was able to exercise real power. In politics, all Leopold's acts were conditional upon ministerial consent, but as head of the army, he had a direct mandate from the nation and thus had power to actually make effective decisions. Soon, it came to be traditional to make a general Minister of War. This² was very clever, for such a man could have little resistance to a soldier monarch under whom he had served, and under whom, after his term of office, he would serve again. Quite naturally, the King would be consulted on all questions touching upon military appointments. An officer's oath of loyalty was taken to the King, Leopold alone commanded their allegiance. It was Leopold who lived with the troops, it was Leopold who rewarded them, and it was to Leopold that the growing royal party within the army looked.²²

²⁰Ibid., p. 287.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

A rather similar situation came to exist within the diplomatic corps. Leopold, because of family ties, past experiences, and his old Coburg quality of charm, remained in direct contact with the crowned heads and the ministers of Europe. His letters, his personal ties, and his influence made him Belgium's first ambassador. He became the real minister of foreign affairs. The diplomats sent to foreign courts were accredited in his name. They consulted with him, were swayed by his opinions, and soon looked upon him as their real chief.²³

In this way King Leopold had control of two very important parts of the administration. Through these he could play a vital rôle in Belgium's political life. This being the case, the government ministers soon found that they had to deal with Leopold, not as an ornament, but as an active political force. They also had a constitutional obligation to "cover the crown" and perpetuate the fiction of the independence and aloofness of the King. So it became impossible, in case of disagreement, to open their complaints to the public or to consult with the parliament. Yet Leopold, as King, was responsible to no one, no explanations need be made for his actions. If he so chose he could indefinitely put off signing orders that did not please him. He could delay appointments he did not like.²⁴

Another device Leopold found useful was to appeal to national pride. He never failed to appear in public in army uniform. The populace

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., p. 288.

never saw him except as a lieutenant general. He succeeded in causing the nation to see him as the head of the army, the means of blotting out all vestiges of the disgrace of 1831.²⁵

It was, however, in his diplomatic rôle that he really shone. He was married to a daughter of the King of the French, he was the respected uncle of the Queen of England, he was related to the Tsar and King of Portugal. He kept up a massive correspondence with the heads of state of Europe. No Belgian government could get on without his help. He was the person who could deal quickly and effectively with serious foreign problems. He was in the effective position of being dictator of Belgium.²⁶

As if that were not enough, time was now on his side. As he grew older in the exercise of his powers they were consolidated by precedent. This process caused his powers to mushroom and proliferate. He now had the right to remove ministers, he could dissolve the Chambers, he could put off, seemingly forever, the signing of unsatisfactory orders. This device of the delayed signature became a real weapon to put pressure upon his ministers.²⁷

King Leopold realized that a strong monarch needed financial freedom. No dependence on a civil list for him! Instead, he built up a large personal fortune through speculation. This was possible because of the

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 288-289.

²⁷Ibid., p. 289.

wonderful sources of information that he could tap. Leopold's financial position became very sound.²⁸

Indeed, Leopold's whole life now seemed to become successful, at least outwardly. His marriage was no exception. The British and French governments had felt that he should marry a princess of France. This was not done with a view toward protecting the neutrality of Belgium,²⁹ that had already been guaranteed for all time.³⁰ It was done to preserve the Franco-British balance.³¹

Leopold's queen was Louise Marie, the daughter of Louis Philippe. She was a sweet, refined, generous, and beautiful lady. Her presence in the Royal Family gave the monarchy a sentimental popular appeal which further consolidated its position.³²

Leopold, like his brother Ernst, was now married and securely seated on a throne. He continued to offer advice to his niece, Victoria, and to other members of the House of Saxe-Coburg. He had what he wanted, his will to power had been gratified, he was a king.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., p. 57.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., p. 289.

³²Ibid.

V. THE SECOND GREAT MARRIAGE

While Leopold rose to eminence in Belgium, back home in Coburg a young prince was growing up who would succeed where Leopold had failed, not only in marrying the ruler of England, but in providing an heir to that throne who would be of Coburg blood.¹ This was, of course, Prince Albert, or, to give him his full name: Francis Charles Augustus Albert Emmanuel. He was the second son of Grand Duke Ernst I of Saxe-Coburg and Louise of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg (unless the rumors previously discussed were true).

Albert was born at the Grand Duke's summer residence, Rosenau, about four miles from Coburg, on August 26, 1819. His older brother, who would become reigning Grand Duke Ernst II in August of 1893 had been born June 21, 1818. Their English cousin, Victoria, was born May 24, 1819.² Both Albert's birth and that of Victoria were attended by the same accoucheuse, Madame Siebold.³ Albert was baptized by Professor Genzler, the clergyman who solemnized the wedding of Victoria's parents.⁴ So, from the very beginning the two Coburg branches were closely and prophetically linked.

The Dowager Grand Duchess of Coburg, Augusta, had long held the hope that her grandson, Albert would one day marry her granddaughter, Victoria. The old Duchess passed on in November of 1831 with her hope still, of course, unrealized, but her aspirations seem to have been

¹Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, I, 363.

²Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 1-2.

³Longford, Queen Victoria: Born to Succeed, p. 22.

⁴Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 1-2.

shared by that resourceful planner, her best loved son, King Leopold.⁵

Leopold now took over the plan, and hoped to see another Coburg-British marriage alliance. He felt that there would be no prince better qualified than his nephew, Prince Albert, to make his niece, Victoria, happy. Still, Leopold was prudent. He was also a man who tried to use every resource available to him. He, therefore, consulted his old friend and advisor, Stockmar.⁶

Stockmar, after seeing his master through his English, Greek, and Belgian adventures, had, in 1834, gone home to a life of retirement in Coburg. He had no desire to accept an official appointment in Belgium. Instead, he lived quietly with his wife and family. Yet, he maintained his interest through continuous confidential correspondence with King Leopold, even though he had no active relations with the Grand Ducal House in Saxe-Coburg. Such was his sense of affection and of duty, however, that an appeal from his old master could not go unanswered, particularly when a great issue was at stake. In addition, he had a very real affection for the Princess Victoria. He, therefore, stood ready to do what he could to advance the project so dear to Leopold's heart.⁷

As Victoria approached her majority, King Leopold watched events most closely. He felt that the time had come to put into action his plan to see Victoria married to Albert.⁸ The first written evidence of

⁵Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, I, 363.

⁶Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 15.

⁷Ibid., pp. 15-17.

⁸Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, I, 363.

Leopold's marriage plan for Victoria and Albert appears in his confidential correspondence with Stockmar. The letter dates from the beginning of 1836. In all likelihood, the idea had been held by Leopold for quite some time before this, but to make it public while the principals were still children might have done more harm than good. Now it became time to begin active work to achieve his purpose, for intrigues were already afoot to marry the Princess to someone else. There were those who were hoping to influence Victoria toward Ernst, Duke of Württemberg, the brother of Prince Albert's step-mother, Duchess Maria, a daughter of Duke Alexander of Württemberg. He was not the only contender. King William IV of England supported one of the Princes of Orange, Alexander, a brother to the King of the Netherlands. This was the same family that had bid for Princess Charlotte's hand before her marriage to Leopold. Furthermore, some of the Hanoverian relatives of Victoria were of the idea that she should marry her cousin, Prince George of Cambridge. There were other possibilities as well. Queen Victoria, herself, declared in later years that there were six serious possible candidates; and in May, 1837, Prince Adalbert of Prussia actually presented his suit.⁹

Accordingly, King Leopold and Stockmar went to work in earnest. In one of her memoranda, Queen Victoria later wrote of that time:

The King of the Belgians has lately given the Queen some of his letters, written to Baron Stockmar in the spring of 1836, to read; and it appears from them that he had early formed the highest opinion of his young, handsome, very amiable

⁹Ibid., p. 364.

and highly gifted nephew, Prince Albert; and that he had come to the happy conclusion that no Prince was so well qualified to make his niece happy, and fitly to sustain the arduous and difficult position of Consort to the Queen of England.¹⁰

This very high opinion of Albert was not universally held at the start by everyone on the Coburg side. Stockmar did not know Albert as well as did Leopold, and he was not as enthusiastic about him. Even Albert's father, Grand Duke Ernst I, had some doubt as to whether Albert or his older brother, Ernst II, heir to the Grand Duchy, should marry Victoria. Ernst I saw in his older son his own qualities of subtlety, and wondered if he might not be more likely to please.¹¹

Stockmar saw it this way:

Albert is a handsome youth who, for his age, is tolerably developed, with pleasant and striking features; and who, if nothing interferes with his progress will probably in a few years be a fine powerful man, with a pleasant, simple, and yet distinguished bearing. Externally. . . he has everything attractive to women, and what must please at all times, and in all countries. It may also be considered as a fortunate circumstance that he has already a certain English look about him.¹²

In 1836 The Duchess of Kent, Victoria's mother, asked her brother, the Grand Duke Ernst I, and his two boys to visit her in England. The Duchess and the Grand Duke, who had now fixed upon Albert as the best choice, arranged between them that Victoria and Albert should not know that this visit was to lay the groundwork for a future marriage. In this way the two children would not be self-conscious with one another.¹³

¹⁰From a Memorandum by Queen Victoria, as quoted in Grey, Early Years of the Prince Consort, p. 214.

¹¹Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, I, 365.

¹²Ibid., p. 366.

¹³Ibid., p. 372.

The visit was hardly a popular project with Princess Victoria's Hanoverian uncle, King William IV. The King, who knew of the regular and extensive correspondence that passed between Victoria and her uncle Leopold, and who disliked all the Coburgs, and suspected that Leopold was working on a plan for a Coburg marriage, opposed it with plans of his own. Two sets of Coburg cousins had already slipped by him to visit Victoria before he realized what may have been the purpose of the visits. When Victoria was only fourteen, Leopold had arranged for the Princes Alexander and Ernst, sons of Leopold's sister, the Duchess of Württemberg, to come to England. Two years later the Princes Ferdinand and Augustus, the sons of Leopold's brother, Ferdinand, had also visited Kensington Palace.¹⁴ Prince Ferdinand, however, was already "taken," since he was on his way to Portugal to marry the Queen, Maria da Gloria, holder of another throne to which the Coburgs had laid siege.¹⁵ Now, in 1836, with Victoria at the romantic age of seventeen, Ernst and Albert, the sons of the oldest Coburg brother were to come, and the King was very displeased.¹⁶

William IV, to stem this invasion of Coburgs, put into action his own plan. He arranged for a visit by the Prince of Orange and his two sons. One of these boys, Prince Alexander, was William's protégé. William is said to have made the threat "that no other marriage would ever take place and that the Duke of Saxe-Coburg and his sons should never put foot in the country: they should not be allowed to land, and must go back

¹⁴Redman, The House of Hanover, pp. 304-305.

¹⁵Longford, Victoria: Born to Succeed, p. 51.

¹⁶Redman, The House of Hanover, pp. 304-305.

whence they came." Yet, they did come. The Prince of Orange and his sons came too.¹⁷

Ernst I and his sons came to England in May, and Victoria and Albert met for the first time. Then, after a visit of four weeks, the two young Coburg princes were hustled off to Brussels where they remained with their Uncle Leopold for ten months.¹⁸

After that, Albert and Ernst II attended the University at Bonn from April 1837 to the end of 1838. While this was happening, Victoria came to her majority May 24, 1837. This was the crucial time when outside forces might try to step in and, quite literally, woo her away from the Coburg influence. William IV, not in the best of health, was not getting any younger. Fully aware of the situation, Leopold had come to Claremont, where he spoke to his niece. It was arranged that from her eighteenth birthday on Stockmar would remain in England as her personal advisor.¹⁹ So efficient were the Coburgs that Victoria's birthday came on May 24th, and Stockmar arrived on the 25th. King William had been taken ill on the 20th, and there was serious doubt as to whether he would recover. He died on June 20th. Victoria was now Queen of England!²⁰

During the year 1838 Stockmar and Leopold continued to work toward the desired marriage. Albert came again to visit his Uncle Leopold in Belgium during February and March. They talked the situation over, man to man, at some length. Afterward, King Leopold wrote Stockmar in March:

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 305-306.

¹⁸Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, I, 372.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 373.

²⁰Ibid., p. 377.

I have had a long conversation with Albert, and have put the whole case honestly and kindly before him. He looks at the question from its most elevated and honourable point of view; he contends that troubles are inseparable from all human positions, and that therefore, if one must be subject to plagues and annoyances, it is better to be so for some great or worthy object than for trifles and miseries. I have told him that his great youth would make it necessary to postpone the marriage for a few years. I found him very sensible on all these points. But one thing he observed with truth. "I am ready," he said, "to submit to this delay, if I have only some certain assurance to go upon. But if after waiting, perhaps, for three years I should find that the Queen no longer desired the marriage, it could place me in a very ridiculous position, and would to a certain extent ruin all the prospects of my future life. . . ." If I am not much mistaken in Albert he possesses all the qualities required to fit him completely for the position he will occupy in England. His understanding is sound, his apprehension clear and rapid, and his feeling correct. He has great powers of observation, and possesses much prudence, without anything about him that can be called cold or morose.²¹

Leopold made up his mind that a delay in the marriage would be necessary since Victoria had asked for it. Victoria confided to Leopold that she felt unable to consider marriage for the next three or four years. She said that since coming to the throne she had allowed her correspondence with Albert to lapse. She wrote:

Nor can the Queen now think without indignation against herself, of her wish to keep the Prince waiting for probably three or four years, at the risk of ruining all his prospects for life, until she might feel inclined to marriage.

The only excuse the Queen can make for herself is in the fact, that the sudden change from the secluded life at Kensington to the independence of her position as Queen Regnant, at the age of eighteen, put all ideas of marriage out of her mind, which she now bitterly repents. A worse school for a young girl, or one more detrimental to all natural feelings and affections cannot well be imagined, than the position of a Queen at eighteen, without experience and without a husband to guide and support her.²²

²¹Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, II, 3.

²²Grey, Early Years of the Prince Consort, p. 220.

In April the two Coburg princes were back with their Uncle Leopold. Leopold told Stockmar, by letter, on April 12:

Albert is much improved; he looks so much more manly. . . . If he waits till he is in his twenty-first, twenty-second, or twenty-third year, it will be impossible for him to begin any new career, and his whole life would be marred, if the Queen should change her mind.²³

On October 10, 1839 Albert and Ernst came to Windsor. Albert made up his mind to tell Victoria frankly that she would have to commit herself, or he would wait no longer.²⁴ Victoria said that Albert might come if he wanted, but he must realize that she regarded herself as quite uncommitted. There could be no question of her marriage, she firmly maintained, for several years. Yet, when she saw Albert, radiating the Coburg charm, her strength was as water. On October 13th she confided to Lord Melbourne that she had decided to marry Albert.²⁵ On October 15th the engagement became a fact.²⁶ Victoria could not wait to tell Stockmar:

Windsor Castle, 15th October, 1839.

I do feel so guilty, I know not how to begin my letter-- but I think the news it will contain will be sufficient to ensure your forgiveness. Albert has completely won my heart, and all was settled between us this morning. . . . I feel certain he will make me very happy. I wish I could say I felt as certain of my making him happy, but I shall do my best. Uncle Leopold must tell you all about the details which I have not time to do. . . . Albert is very much attached to you.²⁷

²³Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, II, 4.

²⁴Ibid., p. 15.

²⁵David Cecil, Melbourne (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1939), p. 381.

²⁶Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, II, 15.

²⁷Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 36-40.

By the 16th Albert also made his report, announcing his success to Stockmar by letter:

I write to you on one of the happiest days of my life, to give you the most welcome news possible.²⁸

Nor was Albert, in the flush of his success, prone to forget his Coburg family affection and duties; writing from Windsor on November 6, 1839 he said:

I must add, what I forgot to tell my uncle in my letter, that after we leave this, we must organise a chain of couriers between Coburg, Wiesbaden, Brussels, and London, that our letters may go quickly, often, and safely. Please talk to my uncle about this.²⁹

The Prince was fulfilling what he had once told his grandmother, the Dowager Grand Duchess of Gotha. He promised, "ein treuer Deutcher, Coburger, Gothaner zu sein."³⁰

Rumors of the engagement got back to the people of Coburg even before Prince Albert, himself, returned, but Albert told nothing except to his own family. He waited until official announcement was made in England. Meanwhile, the Coburgers were on tenterhooks. Prince Albert wrote to Victoria:

Coburg, 30th November, 1839

You receive these lines from dear old Coburg, where I have been received with all possible cordiality. All are on the tiptoe of curiosity, anxious to know, and yet not daring to ask, and I am cruel enough to say nothing. This state of uncertainty, however, will not continue long. The next newspaper will probably bring the news of your declaration to the Privy Council, and then there will be a general outburst of joy among the people here.³¹

²⁸Grey, Early Years of the Prince Consort, p. 226.

²⁹Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, II, 18.

³⁰Redman, House of Hanover, p. 336.

³¹Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 46-47.

To his aunt, the Duchess of Kent, Albert expressed some of his turbulent feelings at where affection and duty were about to lead him:

Coburg, 6th December, 1839

Dearest Aunt,--Accept my most hearty thanks for your dear note, which convinces me I am still often in your thoughts. What a multitude of emotions of the most diverse kind sweeps over and overwhelms me--hope, love for dear Victoria, the pain of leaving home, the parting from very dear kindred, the entrance into a new circle of relations, all meeting me with the utmost kindness, prospects the most brilliant, the dread of being unequal to my position, the demonstrations of so much attachment on the part of the loyal Coburgers, English enthusiasm on the tiptoe of expectation, the multiplicity of duties to be fulfilled, and, to crown all, so much laudation on every side, that I could sink to the earth with very shame! I am lost in bewilderment. I pack, arrange, give directions about pieces of property, settle contracts, engage servants, write an infinitude of letters, study the English Constitution, and occupy myself about my coming future.

Ernst has left me, and gone to Dresden. I am not to see him in Coburg again.

Everything is deep in snow, and I am tormented with a heavy cold. Forgive me, dearest Aunt, if what I write be rather confused. Just at present I am in that state myself. Not to weary you more, I take my leave, and remain,

Your devoted Nephew,
Albert³²

England was happy with the match. The British had been anxious to sever the tie with the decadent House of Hanover; they were delighted to know the Duke of Cumberland would now probably not be their next king. On November 23 the Privy Council was given official notice of the marriage.³³ On January 9, 1840 the redoubtable Stockmar arrived in England again as Plenipotentiary of Prince Albert to arrange the terms of the

³²Ibid., p. 48.

³³Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 53-54.

treaty of marriage between Victoria and Albert with Palmerston.³⁴ He was also to make arrangements for the Coburg prince's household.³⁵

As early as December 6, 1839, King Leopold, his usual caninness shrewdly taking the measure of British popular prejudice, strongly urged Victoria that it should be mentioned that Prince Albert was a Protestant. This, he insisted, could do no harm, while failure to do so could "give use to interminable growling." "On religious matters," he went on, "one cannot be too prudent because one can never see what passionate use people will make of such a thing."³⁶ Unfortunately, the wise old Belgian King did not have his way in the matter; the Melbourne Cabinet failed to make a point of Albert's Protestantism. His religion was not mentioned in the Declaration to the Houses of Parliament.³⁷

On January 16, 1840 Victoria formally opened Parliament, and announced her approaching marriage. This was followed by the debate on her address from the throne in which the Tories pointed out that the notification of the marriage failed to designate Prince Albert as a Protestant. This had very likely been left out by the Government in order to spare the feelings of their Roman Catholic supporters in Ireland. Actually, the speakers had no intention of expressing actual doubt that Albert was Protestant, but it would have been a greater satisfaction to have this actually spelled out in the text. The Duke of Wellington accordingly proposed, in the House of Lords, an amendment that would place

³⁴Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, II, 21.

³⁵Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 54.

³⁶Ibid., p. 57.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 57-58.

the word "Protestant" next to the word "Prince." This amendment he was able to carry against the Government. Not long afterwards Stockmar had a note from Palmerston that gave proof that there actually were some who, for whatever motive, had raised doubts as to Albert's religion. Writing under some pressure, Palmerston asked, "Can you tell me whether Prince Albert belongs to any Protestant sect, the tenets of which could prevent him from partaking of the Lord's Supper, according to the rites of the Church of England?" To this Stockmar gave the very decided answer that the Prince was not a member of any sect, and that there was no material difference between the Lord's Supper as celebrated by the German Protestant Church and that celebrated according to the Church of England.³⁸

Two other questions now came up that were thorny ones. These had to be resolved before Prince Albert arrived in England. These were the questions of an annuity and of the rank Albert was to hold.³⁹ In the matter of the Prince's annuity several precedents existed. Caroline, George II's Queen; Charlotte, the wife of George III; Adelaide, who married William IV; and, of course, the first Coburg attempt, Leopold, as husband of Princess Charlotte, had all been granted £50,000 annually for their privy purse. Confidently, Melbourne's Cabinet asked for this amount. The days when such might be granted easily were, however, now

³⁸Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, II, 25. Cf. Benson, The Letters of Queen Victoria, I, 196. Victoria, at Melbourne's request, asked for a statement of the history of the House of Coburg that would indicate the part they had played in the Lutheran faith.

³⁹Ibid.

past. The period was one of commercial depression throughout the nation. This made it most unlikely that the proposal would pass without serious opposition. Yet, it might have been possible to avoid such friction if leaders of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition had been approached with tact by the Government. However, this was not tried; rather, the issue was submitted to a vote in Commons on January 27, 1840 with no previous agreement.⁴⁰

An acrimonious debate followed. The Ministerial side insinuated that there was a want of loyalty among the Opposition. The Opposition was also charged with lack of respect to the Crown. On the other hand, the Opposition was inclined to wonder if the party in power might not be hoping for an unfavorable vote with the effect that Prince Albert would then distrust the Opposition and the Queen would be irritated with them. In the end, there was a motion by Mr. Hume that the annuity be reduced to £21,000. This did not pass, and, instead, on the motion of Colonel Sifthorp, supported by Sir Robert Peel and several Opposition leaders, the annuity was set at £30,000.⁴¹

The next issue was the vexed question of the Prince's rank. Stockmar suggests that the most natural and desirable course would have been to grant the Prince, unconditionally, the precedence next after the Queen. This would place him before all other members of the Royal Family, both relatives of George III and Albert's own offspring. This proved impossible to accomplish.⁴² The question in hand was a very delicate one

⁴⁰Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 59.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 58-59.

⁴²Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, II, 32.

that would most probably have repercussions in any similar cases that might arise in the future. It, therefore, cried out for extraordinary care, sensitivity, and tact. Hitherto, no provision had been set down by the Constitution for the title and precedence of the legal spouse of a Queen Regnant. The wife of a king had, of course, a rank and dignity directly after her husband assigned to her by law. Obviously, the unusual circumstances of the marriage of a Queen Regent would demand special treatment. If the status and precedence of the Queen's husband were not carefully defined, they might later be contested by the Queen's own offspring, or other members of the Royal Family. The Queen's husband might be placed in the embarrassing position of holding his position only by his wife's grace and favor within the country, and only by the condescension or sufferance of tolerant sovereigns when outside it.⁴³

The Ministry tried, through the device of placing a clause in the Prince's Bill of Naturalisation, to give him precedence next after the Queen. There had been some groundwork done on the subject, for the Queen's Hanoverian uncles, the Dukes of Sussex and Cambridge, were questioned as to their attitude on the subject. With some show of reluctance, they consented. However, the Duke of Cumberland, who was also King of Hanover, not only refused absolutely, but he urged that the Tories work against the proposal, and he persuaded the Duke of Cambridge to withdraw his consent.⁴⁴

⁴³Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 60-61.

⁴⁴Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, II, 32-33.

The Bill of Naturalisation came up in the House of Lords on January 27, the same day on which Prince Albert received the financial rebuff from the House of Commons.⁴⁵ The Ministry made no attempt to discover the views of the House. The question was simply presented as a part of what professed to be nothing but a Bill for the Naturalisation of the Prince.⁴⁶

An Act for the Naturalisation of His Serene Highness Prince Albert of Saxe Coburg and Gotha.

Whereas it hath pleased Her Majesty most graciously to declare Her intention to ally Herself in Marriage with the Prince Albert of Saxe Coburg, and Gotha: and whereas more grateful proof of the esteem and affection of the Kingdom cannot be given to His Serene Highness than by an Act of Naturalisation to make him capable of enjoying the Rights and Liberties which are enjoyed in this Realm⁴⁷

However, the bill also had within it the clause which stated:

That the Prince, for his life, was to take precedence in rank after Her Majesty, in Parliament and elsewhere, as Her Majesty may think fit and proper, any law to the contrary, notwithstanding.⁴⁸

Thus, in presenting this bill, the Whig Ministry made an error in form, which allowed the Tories to impede its rapid passage. They omitted to mention in the bill's title that it had reference, not only to naturalization, but also to rank.⁴⁹

⁴⁵Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 60.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 62.

⁴⁷Great Britain, Parliament, Sessional Papers (House of Commons), 1840, An Act for the Naturalisation of His Serene Highness Prince Albert of Saxe Coburg and Gotha, I, 44.

⁴⁸Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, II, 32-33.

⁴⁹Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, II, 33.

Therefore, following a motion by the Duke of Wellington, the debate was adjourned, for the House was given no knowledge of this important addition. Lord Brougham made objection to the Government proposal, that, as the bill was to have unconditional validity throughout the entire life of Prince Albert, he would then have unconditional precedence over every eldest son and heir apparent of a sovereign. Should the Queen die without issue, Albert would have precedence over the eldest Prince of the Kingdom, the man next in succession, Ernest Augustus of Hanover. The Government met this with a modification to the effect that the Queen should have the power to grant Prince Albert precedence after any heir apparent. The Opposition were still not satisfied; they insisted that this precedence be limited to the lifetime of the Queen.⁵⁰

Stockmar found out from the Tories that the precedence clause was sure to be thrown out in the House of Lords. He found that none of the people that might have served as go-between to Wellington or Peel were in London. Therefore, in great anxiety, he sent his trusted friend, Mrs. W. [no further identification given] to see Wellington, and to make him realize how important this matter was to the Queen. The Duke received her, but after remonstrating with her, gave an uncertain reply, and this move led to no results.⁵¹

Queen Victoria had accepted the defeat on the matter of the annuity, but she now placed all the more importance on the matter of precedence. This is why, when Lord Melbourne told her that he would

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 33-34.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 34.

probably be defeated on the issue in the House of Lords, and suggested that it be dropped, she could not agree. Following this, Stockmar visited Melbourne and found him torn by doubt. Stockmar advised, "For God's sake withdraw your bill and do not allow yourself to be beaten a second time. This would have the very worst effect possible." To which Lord Melbourne replied, "That I fully believe; but the Queen lays the greatest possible stress upon the matter." Stockmar now asserted himself in his role as tutor and guardian of the younger Coburgs, "Be only firm and prove to Her Majesty the evil results that would follow from a second discomfiture." Stockmar went on to advise, "Settle the matter of precedence by an Order in Council as the Regent did in the case of Prince Leopold." Stockmar then went home and copied down the very words used by the Regent in 1826 in fix the rank of Leopold, and sent them off to Lord Melbourne.⁵²

The Coburg approach prevailed. The issue was settled according to Stockmar's idea. The precedence clause was dropped by the Government, and the bill passed as a simple bill of naturalisation.⁵³

Precedence of Prince Albert was fixed by royal prerogative, using Letters Patent, to the effect that the Queen granted to the Prince precedence next to herself, on all occasions and in all meetings, except where otherwise provided for by Act of Parliament. The clause of restriction had reference to a law of Henry VIII which determined precedence in Council and in the House of Lords, for, of course, a Royal Ordinance could not invalidate the established precepts of the law.⁵⁴

⁵²Ibid., pp. 34-35.

⁵³Grey, Early Years of the Prince Consort, pp. 263 and 325.

⁵⁴Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, II, 35-36.

In doing this the Queen did not grant any distinctive title to Prince Albert.⁵⁵ This situation could, and in Albert's case did, lead to embarrassing situations. Queen Victoria said of this:

When I first married, we had much difficulty on this subject [precedence], much bad feeling was shown, several members of the Royal Family showed bad grace in giving precedence to the Prince, and the late King of Hanover positively resisted doing so. . . . When the Queen was abroad, the Prince's position was always a subject of negotiation and vexation: the position accorded to him by the Queen always had to be acknowledged as a grace and favour bestowed on her by the Sovereigns whom she visited. While, in 1856, the Emperor of the French treated the Prince as a Royal personage, his uncle declined to come to Paris, because he would not give precedence to the Prince; and on the Rhine in 1845, the King of Prussia would not give the place to the Queen's husband, which common civility required, because of the presence of an Archduke, the third son of an uncle of the reigning Emperor of Austria, who would not give the pas, and whom the King would not offend. The only legal position in Europe, according to international law, which the husband of the Queen of England enjoyed, was that of a younger brother of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, and this merely because the English law did not know of him. This is derogatory to the dignity of the Crown of England.⁵⁶

It was not to be until July 2, 1857 that Albert would receive the title of Prince Consort, again, by Royal Letters Patent. By this time the title was already in common use among sympathetic subjects.⁵⁷

With matters thus all arranged, on February 6th Albert arrived in England, the marriage took place, and the Prince produced a favorable first impression. By the middle of the year the Prince's position appeared ready for further consolidation as there was hope for an heir. Stockmar was already far ahead of the game; he was thinking about a Regency in the

⁵⁵Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 63.

⁵⁶From a Memorandum by Queen Victoria, May, 1856, as quoted in Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 62.

⁵⁷Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 63.

event of the Queen's death in childbirth. That Regency must be assigned to Prince Albert. Stockmar wrote:

As soon as the doctors can announce to the Ministers the state of the Queen, with a probability bordering on certainty, the latter must lay before Parliament a Regency Bill to meet the possibility of the Queen dying, and leaving a minor as her heir. My plan would be to act upon a full understanding with the Opposition. I don't know what the Queen and the Ministry will think of this plan. But when I call to mind the course matters took in regard to the annuity and the question of the Prince's precedence, I feel almost inclined to act on my own responsibility. There can be but two alternatives: either that the Prince should be named Regent without or with a Council. It appears to me, after considering the arguments on which the Regency Bill of the Duchess of Kent was founded, that the best course will be that Albert should be appointed sole Regent.

I shall endeavour to work in this sense on the Tories and the Opposition, but I don't hide from myself that there will be all manner of objections, such as his youth, his want of acquaintance with the country and its institutions, &c., and that the Dukes of Cumberland, Cambridge, and Sussex, not wishing to be passed over, will endeavour to put a spoke in the wheel, the former by means of the ultra-Tories, the latter by means of the ultra-Liberals.⁵⁸

Further letters of Doctor Stockmar show that he twice wrote to Sir Robert Peel in reference to the Regency Bill, through Lord Liverpool. Stockmar expressed the opinion that unanimity of all parties was very important. Peel's reply was guarded, but friendly. He was fully aware of what had taken place at the time of the Regency Bill for the Duchess of Kent since he was Minister at the time. He said it would be necessary, before he rendered an opinion, to consult a small group of his supporters. Then Peel heard that it was not the intention of the Ministry to present the bill during the current session; instead, they

⁵⁸Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, II, 36-39.

would convoke Parliament in October for that purpose. When Stockmar mentioned the subject to Lord Melbourne, he said that he had never considered such an unpractical idea. Given that answer, Lord Liverpool went to Peel again. Peel was now friendly, but reserved. He said he had only discussed the subject with Wellington, and could only give his own opinion, which was not to be taken as that of his party. Albert, he felt, was the natural guardian for his own child. The only question would be whether or not there ought to be a Council of Regency. He really did not see the practical use of a Council of Regency, and still less the use of placing on it such people as the Duke of Sussex. Such a council could only lead to arguments and intrigues. Everything he had seen and heard of Prince Albert was in his favor. He felt the Ministry should bring in the bill as soon as possible.⁵⁹

Melbourne now sought a conference with Stockmar. Stockmar passed on what he had heard from Peel via Lord Liverpool. He said that he, himself, quite concurred. Still there were difficulties. The bill would provide for the next eighteen years because if the Queen were to die immediately after birth of an heir, the heir's minority would last for that period. Melbourne realized that they would need unanimity in both Houses for such a bill, but he seriously doubted that they could get it. Stockmar assumed from these sentiments that Melbourne had probably discussed the matter with some of his colleagues, and they must have given rise to doubts in his mind. Stockmar tried to show Melbourne that there was danger in delaying the bill; it must be presented at once.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 39-40.

Melbourne agreed and said he would make no move until he had consulted Wellington.⁶⁰

The next steps that occurred were written up by Stockmar:

June 28

Peel came to-day quite unexpectedly to Lord Liverpool, and said to him in a friendly and straightforward manner, with a view to its being communicated to the Prince, that there was an intrigue on foot among the Radicals, for the purpose of setting up the Duke of Sussex as Co-Regent. His advice to the Prince was to remain perfectly quiet and passive. He, Peel, would take care that no harm should happen to the Prince from that side.⁶¹

June 29

Melbourne told me with reference to the question of the Regency, that after his conversation with me, he had gone straight to the Duke of Wellington. The Duke at once asked him, "What are you going to do? You must do something." He had answered, that, after carefully weighing the matter, he had decided against anything in the shape of a Council of Regency. The idea of dividing the Executive power amongst a number of persons, was against the spirit of the English Constitution. His opinion therefore was, that the father of the child should be constituted sole Regent. To this the Duke replied, "This is my view of the case. You probably wish that I should talk with my friends, for instance with Sir Robert Peel, upon the subject. That shall be done, and we shall then meet again to discuss what further steps should be taken."⁶²

July 8

The Duke of Sussex, with whom Anson dined, took the latter after dinner into a corner, and asked him what he knew about the intention of the Ministers, with reference to the Regency Bill. Anson replied, "Nothing but what is said by the public on the subject." Hereupon the Duke burst forth into bitter lamentations, upon the absurdity of this measure; it was perfectly useless and could not fail to agitate the Queen, and thereby probably exercise the most pernicious influence on her health. Moreover, the Ministers ran no sort of risk by omitting to provide for a Regency. Because, if

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 41.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., p. 42.

circumstances should force them to act upon their own responsibility, they could always, later on, get their acts covered by a bill of indemnity. He knew, however, very well who was the moving spring in the matter [Doctor Stockmar]. This perfectly explains why Melbourne, in one of his last conversations with me, showed himself so undecided, and, as counter-arguments to my proposals used word for word the arguments of the Duke. The Duke had, as I was afterwards told, communicated his views through a third person to Lord Melbourne and the Minister had drawn the inference, that the choice of Prince Albert would cause great opposition. The bill will be brought in, in the course of a day or two, and we shall then see, whether Peel and his party keep their word.⁶³

July 11

On Monday the Lord Chancellor will deliver the message respecting the Regency, to the House of Lords.

We must make up our minds, that the friends of the Duke of Sussex will bring forward a few absurdities, or perhaps come out with some disagreeable truths; but, unless all the assurances which have been made to me--and I have had some of the strongest kind--turn out to be simple lies, I do not foresee anything untoward.⁶⁴

July 20

The Duke of Sussex, and the Duchess of Gloucester, are determined to give us a great deal of trouble about the Regency Bill.⁶⁵

A few days later Stockmar adds:

[No date given]

The Regency Bill will be read a second time in the House of Lords. Till now no opposition has been made, except by the Duke of Sussex. The latter, as usual, has acted very irrationally. He and the whole Hanoverian family, he says, have been deeply offended. As regards himself, he only cared about the principle, and not about persons, and this was his reason for protesting. He knew that he was doing himself harm, but he must do his duty. This causes pain to the good-hearted Premier, and he has already sent five or six ambassadors to

⁶³Ibid., p. 43.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 44.

⁶⁵Ibid.

the Duke, in the hope of mollifying him, but as yet without success. Whether the opposition of the Duke will find an echo in the House of Commons, I cannot tell. But even if there are a few foolish speeches, the bill itself is, thanks to the promises of Peel, perfectly safe.⁶⁶

The bill met with no opposition in either Lords or Commons, except for that of the Duke of Sussex. Stockmar could well be satisfied with the result of his efforts. Prince Albert recognized in full the service he had rendered. To his father, the Grand Duke Ernst I of Saxe-Coburg, Albert wrote on July 24:

There has been much trouble to carry the matter through, for all sorts of intrigues were at work, and had not Stockmar gained the Opposition for the Ministers, it might well have ended as did the £50,000.⁶⁷

His job in hand finished, Stockmar returned to Coburg. He would, of course, later return to England to continue to guide and help Victoria and Albert, and to help in the education of their son and heir, Edward VII. Meanwhile, the House of Coburg had won again. Ernst I could feel proud of his son, Leopold could exult in vicarious victory in England at last. The Coburgs now held their own Grand Ducal throne, they had the throne of Belgium, and they stood next to the throne of England and controlled the Regency should it eventuate. What next? Where next?

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 44-45.

⁶⁷Grey, Early Years of the Prince Consort, p. 352.

VI. THE PORTUGUESE MARRIAGE

In tying up all the threads of a story as complex as the saga of the rise of the House of Coburg, order and continuity are difficult to maintain. The Coburg-Portuguese marriage actually took place before the marriage of Victoria and Albert, but it does not match the English marriage in importance, and since the English marriage was an outgrowth of the previous activities of Leopold in England, the Portuguese story has been reserved until this point where it will be briefly examined before considering the Spanish Marriages in which it played a part.

The Portuguese marriage arrangements took place in the years 1835 and 1836. Queen Regnant Donna Maria, born April 4, 1819, was then occupying the throne of Portugal as a widowed queen. She had married the Duke of Leuchtenberg, the brother of her own step-mother, Amalia of Leuchtenberg, second wife of King Pedro IV of Portugal. The marriage proved to be extremely short; the bridegroom dying just two months and two days after it was solemnized on January 26, 1835.¹

As Portuguese affairs were in a dangerously unsettled state, it was important that the Queen re-marry as soon as possible. Her choice for a second husband was Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Kohary. Prince Ferdinand, Roman Catholic, was one of the offspring of Ferdinand, the younger brother of Ernst I and of King Leopold, who had married the wealthy Hungarian Princess Antoinette of Kohary at the time of the Congress of Vienna.²

¹Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, I, 356.

²Ibid., p. 357.

The negotiations for the Portuguese marriage were carried out by Stockmar and the Coburg Minister to Portugal, Baron von Karlowitz. It was they who drew up the marriage contract which was then duly signed at Coburg. The Portuguese Plenipotentiary was Count Lavradio, who had, for many years, been the Portuguese representative to the English Court.³

This was the first of the Coburg maneuvers in which Stockmar played a major role. It was he who served as Prince Ferdinand's guide, seeing him safely through the delicate and dangerous situation. Among Stockmar's duties were that of securing for the Prince sufficient funds for his trip, and for the period after his arrival in Portugal, choosing proper attendants, and arranging for visits to the Courts of Belgium and England while enroute to Lisbon so that Ferdinand might be properly prepared for his own place in the Portuguese Court. Stockmar felt that close observation of these Courts, and the advice and example of Ferdinand's Uncle Leopold would aid in fitting him for the position he was to assume. On December 23, Stockmar noted:

The best opportunity for making acquaintance with really great society, with politics, and life as it is, is to be found in Brussels, for the near relationship of the young Prince to the Court, will smooth many difficulties in his first début. If the Queen of the French is to be in Brussels at the same time with some of her children, so much the better. The Prince can have no better example than this family, so admirably brought up, and it is politically important for him to make acquaintance with them. His début in London will be more difficult. But the impression he makes in England will precede him to Lisbon and on it will partly depend the success he will meet with there. What England can and will give is this, a friendly reception at Court, an English man-of-war for the voyage to Portugal, and decided instructions to Howard de Walden [England's Minister in Lisbon], for bons offices, assistance, and support.⁴

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., pp. 357-358.

Stockmar had had his hands full in trying to arrange the marriage contract because the elder Prince Ferdinand, father of the prospective bridegroom, was as prudent and cautious as his brother, King Leopold. The elder Prince Ferdinand was concerned to see that everything would be truly secure, so that his son would run no risks in Portugal. He had, for instance, demanded that England guarantee the marriage contract. Stockmar was forced to impress upon him that this was not possible, and that there must be some element of risk in order to make a gain.⁵

Even after the Plenipotentiaries had signed the wedding contract at Coburg, they had grave doubts about its ratification in Lisbon. Intrigues were afoot in favor of one of the sons of the French King, Louis Philippe, as a prospective husband for the Queen of Portugal. This was all a part of extensive and long-lasting attempts by the head of the House of Bourbon-Orléans to gain influence in the royal houses of the Iberian peninsula, which would culminate in the question of the Spanish Marriages. Stockmar was aware of what was going on:

December 10, 1835

We are prepared by Lavradio for intrigues in Portugal against this marriage. He considers there would be endless difficulties in the way of a French Prince, and it is difficult to find anyone else.

As for the French share in the intrigues, I don't doubt that Louis Philippe is aware of them. Whether he is so far in earnest that he would pursue his object at the risk of offending England, I cannot determine. I know, however, that after Leuchtenberg's death, the English Cabinet formally announced to the Portuguese, that a marriage with a French Prince would never receive the sanction of England.⁶

⁵Ibid., pp. 358-359.

⁶Ibid., p. 359.

Lord Palmerston also wrote to Baron Stockmar:

Foreign Office, December 18, 1835

My dear Baron--Many thanks for your letter of the 9th, which gives me your view of the bridegroom and the marriage. Your account of the young Prince is sufficiently good! If he is tall and stoops a little it will be said he is only condescending, for the Portuguese are generally short, and he will be considered as studiously inclined to give ear to his subjects. However, joking apart, he belongs to a good race, and there can be no doubt of his turning out well, both morally and physically, and I think the Portuguese and their Queen are very fortunate in the choice which has been made. I shall write to Howard by to-day's mail, and instruct him to take the necessary steps for urging a ratification. He will put it to Loulé, [the Portuguese Minister] if there should be any hesitation, that he, Loulé, is specifically and personally bound to have the contract ratified, because, if it was rejected, he being in the Government, all Europe would say he had broken off the match from interested views, and in order to favour the contingent and remote claims of his own children to the succession [he was related by marriage to the Portuguese Royal family]. But the matter has gone too far to admit of retraction on either side. As to the French match, I know not what to think. It is quite certain that the Loulé's, and others in the interest and in the pay of Louis Philippe, did carry on an intrigue, which at one moment was successful, to persuade the Queen to declare in favour of Nemours, while at the same time Louis Philippe was solemnly assuring Granville that such a proposal, if made, would not be accepted by him. That there was mystification, and intrigue, and trick somewhere or other is demonstrable, and that all this was at once put an end to by our unreserved declaration at Lisbon is equally certain. Who the parties were who planned the cabal, how far they meant to carry it, and what their ultimate objectives were, it is impossible for us to know, but, if Louis Philippe's sentiments and intentions were really such as he declared them to be to Lord Granville, I do not see why he should take so much amiss the steps we took at Lisbon to prevent the future progress of a scheme which could only involve the Queen of Portugal in disappointment and discredit.

My dear Baron, Yours sincerely,

Palmerston.⁷

⁷Ibid., pp. 360-361.

Yet, despite all machinations and intrigues the Queen of Portugal married Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Kohary on April 9, 1836.⁸ That did not end the intrigues in the Iberian peninsula, it was only the prelude to greater involvements yet to come.

⁸Ibid., p. 357.

VII. THE SPANISH MARRIAGES

On October 10, 1846 a double royal wedding took place in Spain. The Spanish Queen Regnant, Isabella, married Don Francisco, the Duke of Cadiz, son of the sister of her mother, Queen Mother Christina. The other half of the double wedding was the nuptials of Queen Isabella's sister, Infanta Louisa Ferdinanda and the Duke of Montpensier, the youngest son of the King of the French, Louis Philippe. This wedding represented a triumph for Louis Philippe and the House of Bourbon-Orléans, but it was the frustrating end of an involved and vexing affair for the House of Saxe-Coburg. In addition, grave offense was taken by the English Court; Lord Palmerston was angered; the English population was embittered; and the entente cordiale with France collapsed.¹

The whole affair began in 1841 when both France and England became aware of the probability of the two Spanish marriages. Both the Queen of Spain and her sister, and heiress, were looking for bridegrooms. As early as December 28, 1840 Queen Victoria had recorded a conversation that took place involving herself, Lord Melbourne, and Palmerston. The subject under discussion was the future King Consort of Spain. Although Queen Isabella of Spain was then only ten years old, Britain and France were already contemplating her future marriage with an eye to protecting their respective interests. The British were inclined to favor Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Kohary, Victoria's charming and high spirited cousin. It was hoped that Leopold's Coburg brain and his sense of duty would forge ties between the British Royal Family and Europe. Leopold

¹Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, II, 130-131.

also possessed the good looks that would make him acceptable to Isabella. This was a valuable asset for, although Isabella was far from a beauty herself, the British felt that she would need someone outstanding who could fascinate her and hold her attention. Despite all the favorable auguries, this match had to be ruled out after it had been duly considered. The three who sat in council that day decided that this match could not fail to arouse the anger of France.² On the other hand, the French King would have been delighted to see the hand of Queen Isabella bestowed on one of his sons. It is even likely that he discussed the possibility of such a marriage with the Spanish Queen Mother Christina. He must have soon seen that in this he would encounter the firm opposition of England. Accordingly, he made repeated denials of any such intentions for his sons. Nevertheless, with his minister, Guizot, he declared that the unalterable demand of France was that the future husband of Spain's Queen should be a member of the House of Bourbon. He then pressed to secure the hand of Infanta Louisa for his son, Montpensier.³

To some authorities, it appears that from the very start, Queen Mother Christina desired that one or both of her daughters should wed a French prince. Despite this, in 1841, she hinted in an oblique manner, through three different people, that it was a Coburg prince that she preferred for her daughter, Isabella.⁴ She mentioned, first, the heir

²Langford, Victoria: Born to Succeed, pp. 186-187.

³Ibid., p. 133.

⁴Ibid., p. 135. Cf. Henry Reeve, ed., the Greville Memoirs (Second Part), A Journal of the Reign of Queen Victoria From 1837 to 1852, by Charles C. F. Greville (3 vols.; London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1885), III, 32. Hereafter cited as Greville Memoirs (Second Part). Greville felt that the Queen Mother actually would have concluded the Coburg marriage, if England had persisted in opposition to Montpensier.

to the Grand Duchy, Ernst II, and, second, Prince Leopold, son of Prince Ferdinand and brother of King Ferdinand of Portugal.⁵ For a number of reasons the ruling Grand Duke would not consider the first proposal. The other Coburg prince, Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Kohary, was a far more likely choice.⁶ There was much in favor of this personable possessor of the Coburg charm.⁷ He was related to both the French and the English Royal Family, was of the Roman Catholic branch of the House of Coburg, and was vital, intelligent, and handsome. It seemed very possible that he might make a good husband, a good king. A special added asset was the fact that his brother was King of Portugal, and this family tie might help to remove the poor understanding then existing between the two Iberian nations.⁸ The British Government did not put much weight in the Queen Mother's hints. They supposed that they were not sincere, but were done only in order to discover the views of the British Cabinet.⁹

There was one who, right from the start, displayed a passionate aversion to the choice of a Coburg to marry into the Spanish Royal House. This, of course, was Louis Philippe of France. However, the French King's

⁵Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 345.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Brian Connell, Regina v. Palmerston (London: Evans Brothers, Limited, 1962), p. 36.

⁸Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 345.

⁹Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, II, 135. Cf. W. Baring Pemberton, Lord Palmerston (London: Batchworth Press, 1954), p. 135. Pemberton says that for years the British believed that the Queen Mother was actually in collusion with Louis Philippe the whole time. Palmerston apparently believed this to be the case.

antagonism was not really needed to pressure either Prince Albert or the British Government into deciding not to interfere, either directly or indirectly, with the Queen of Spain's choice. They had already adopted this position. Leopold was in no sense the English candidate.¹⁰ Yet, when the repeated attempts of the Government of France to push the candidacy of Count Trapani failed, there were those in the Court and Government of Spain who again began to look with some interest to Leopold of Saxe-Coburg.¹¹ This definite possibility of Prince Leopold as a bridegroom for the Queen of Spain was, at first, not popular in England. Before leaving office at the end of August, 1841, Palmerston had expressed the opinion that Prince Leopold was too closely connected, by marriage, with the Duke of Nemours, who was a son of Louis Philippe. Nemours was married to Leopold's sister, Victoire. Following Palmerston's line, Queen Victoria was also more opposed than in favor of such a marriage. Aberdeen, who succeeded Palmerston in office, was always inclined to use whatever means he could to preserve good relations with the French. He even went so far as to say to Louis Philippe:

As to the candidature of Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg you needn't worry on that score; I guarantee that it will be neither admitted nor supported by England and that you won't be embarrassed by it.¹²

¹⁰Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 346-347.

¹¹Ibid., p. 350.

¹²T.E.B. Howarth, Citizen-King: The Life of Louis-Philippe, King of the French. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1961), p. 299. Hereafter cited as Citizen-King.

He was, therefore, ready to agree to a Bourbon as husband for Queen Isabella, if the Bourbon in question were not a son of Louis Philippe. Then too, Aberdeen feared that trouble and friction arising from the candidacy by Prince Leopold might spoil relations with France.¹³

Leopold's cousin, Prince Albert, and that accomplished match-maker, Stockmar, were only conditionally in favor of his candidature. To them his successful candidature was not something that must be achieved come what may. Rather, Albert and Stockmar saw Leopold's candidature as something that might possibly be attained, should circumstances prove favorable, and if it could be done wisely and by honorable means. In short, they sought Leopold's success, provided it might be accomplished without harm to more vital interests.¹⁴

King Leopold was even more detached and philosophical. He, of course, was inclined to such an approach, at least partly, by necessity, because of his delicate position vis-a-vis the French. Therefore, it was Prince Albert and Stockmar who took upon themselves the responsibility to try to smooth Prince Leopold's path should Fate decree to him such a chance. They would attempt to remove those obstacles which he might encounter due to party misrepresentation.¹⁵ Stockmar explained their position in a letter:

May 14, 1842.

As to the Spanish marriage, my wishes and feelings do not influence my judgment, which must be governed only by good sense. This is my view of the subject:

¹³Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, II, 135-136.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 136.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 137.

The Queen must have a husband against whom, in the first place, Spain and Europe can have little objection, in a political point of view, and who, in the second place, is, as a man, mentally and physically so endowed as to give good hopes that he will fill the difficult position of husband of a Queen of Spain, with some measure of success.

The existing Bourbons, tried by either of these standards, have much against them. Our candidate is, in a political point of view, for Spain and for the true interest of Europe, more suitable than many others; and to this may be added, that the relationship with Portugal would probably, in this case, prove a useful element, in placing the two dynasties on that friendly footing, on which, for the benefit of both countries, they should always stand.

But it is another question whether Leopold possesses the necessary qualities for so difficult a position. He is young and inexperienced, and lives in circumstances in which it would be difficult, in a short time, to acquire the necessary development of intellect, and especially of character. To this I must add, that, according to my knowledge of him, he takes little interest in politics.

Under these circumstances one is doing enough, doing all, if one makes it possible for fate to find him, should she in her fancy of bringing unlikely things to pass, still insist on selecting him, notwithstanding all the difficulties in his way.

And this we have done, as far as lay in our power.

We have drawn the attention of Spain and England to this candidate, in the only manner in which, with a reasonable estimate of all the circumstances, it could be done. Espartero has neither declared himself for, nor against it, but has very sensibly declared, that it is an affair which can only be decided by the Spanish Government, with the assistance and agreement of England, with a view to the true interests of the Spanish nation. We have already achieved this much, that the present Ministry, which at first wished for a Bourbon, because such a choice would involve the fewest difficulties, has become impartial, and will loyally support any choice which is made in the true interests of Spain, and which promises success in this respect. So our seedcorn is laid in the earth, in a soil, it is true, in which, according to all appearance, it cannot spring up; but our part in the work, the possible, the only advisable part, is taken, and we must await the result with well considered submission.¹⁶

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 137-139.

In 1843 there were some important developments concerning the Spanish marriages. It was in that year that Queen Victoria and Prince Albert paid a visit to King Louis Philippe at Eu.¹⁷ Queen Victoria had hoped for some time to visit the French King, and to have the opportunity to meet his Queen. There had been cordial relations between the English Royal House and the House of Bourbon-Orléans for a number of years. Louis Philippe, as Duke of Orléans, had been a close friend of Victoria's father. He had also been on friendly terms with Princess Charlotte and Prince Leopold. This close friendship between the Coburgs and the House of Orléans had led to four marriages between the two houses. Queen Victoria had, therefore, ample contact with the various members of the Orléans family even before her marriage to Prince Albert. (It should be noted that her Uncle Leopold was married for the third time in 1832 to the Princess Louise of Orléans, daughter of Louis Philippe.) It was decided that a friendly family visit might help to ease the remaining friction left between France and England because of English actions over the Eastern Question.¹⁸

It was on September 2, 1843, at six in the evening, that Victoria and Albert arrived at the Chateau d'Eu, near Tréport, which was a private domain of Louis Philippe. The French royal party that greeted the English sovereign and her Coburg husband included still another Coburg, Prince Augustus, who was married to Princess Clementine of Orléans. Augustus was the first cousin of both Victoria and Albert, and he was the brother of Prince Leopold and of the King of Portugal.¹⁹

¹⁷Ibid., 139.

¹⁸Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 173.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 174.

Despite rife speculations, this visit was done mainly for the simple purpose of cementing relations, yet there was one thing of a political nature that came up in conversation. This was the voluntary declaration given by Louis Philippe to Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, and Lord Aberdeen, that he had no plans that would lead to placing any of his sons on the Spanish throne.²⁰ The respective ministers of the two sovereigns, Lord Aberdeen and M. Guizot were present, and during this visit Louis Philippe and Guizot gave Aberdeen assurances that they were not trying to obtain Queen Isabella's hand for one of the French King's sons. They said that they would decline any such overtures.²¹

After leaving the Chateau d'Eu Victoria and Albert moved on to Brighton for a few days prior to a visit to their Uncle Leopold in Belgium. It was from the seaside resort that Prince Albert wrote to Stockmar:

The family of Louis Philippe have a strong feeling that for the last thirteen years they have been placed under a ban, as though they were lepers, by all Europe, and by every Court, and expelled from the society of the reigning Houses, and therefore they rate very highly the visit of the most powerful Sovereign in Europe. The King said this to me over and over again. Guizot and Aberdeen, as might be expected, are being abused by both parties for betraying their country.

Little passed of a political nature, except the declaration of Louis Philippe to Aberdeen that he will not give his son to Spain, even if he were asked; and Aberdeen's answer, that, excepting one of his sons, any aspirant whom Spain might choose would be acceptable to England. . . .

Albert

Brighton, September 10, 1843.²²

²⁰Ibid., p. 181.

²¹Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, II, 139.

²²Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 181-183.

In September of 1845 Victoria and Albert again visited at Eu. During this second visit an understanding was reached, but later there were to be important differences of opinion, real or feigned, over exactly what that agreement was and what it meant. Each side was to declare that the other had failed to keep their part of the agreement. Therefore, it becomes necessary to examine the opinions expressed by the witnesses. A complicating factor is that these conferences went on partly between Louis Philippe and Guizot on the one side, with Lord Aberdeen on the other, and partly between Queen Victoria and Prince Albert on one side, with Louis Philippe as their opposite number. Even Stockmar's son, after examining his father's papers, could not say with certainty whether the above mentioned discussions went on in entirely different and separate conversations, or whether all the people named were present at the same conversation at the same time. Therefore, it is understandable that a slight difference in the various versions of what actually occurred should emerge. Louis Philippe, in a letter of September 14, 1846, written to his daughter, the Queen of the Belgians, wife of King Leopold, claims that it was Aberdeen who first of anyone, and of his own accord, brought up the subject of the marriage of the Spanish Infanta. On the other hand, a memorandum of Stockmar's indicates that it was Louis Philippe who raised the subject while talking with Queen Victoria.²³

In the last analysis the different witnesses are in agreement on two main points. The King of the French and Guizot said that the Duke of

²³Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, II, 140. The full text of Louis Philippe's letters appears in Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, as does the letters of Prince Albert and some of those of Victoria.

Montpensier would not marry the Infanta until her sister, Queen Isabella, had married and had issue. The English delegation promised that no prince who was not of the House of Bourbon, especially not Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, would be recognized and supported as the English candidate for the Queen of Spain's hand.²⁴

Beyond those two basic points, however, the French and English versions diverge. King Louis Philippe insists, in the same letter to his daughter, that the agreement was that his son should not marry the Infanta until after Queen Isabella was married and had had a child ("quand elle aura eu un enfant"). Yet, the English party maintained that the stipulation was for children ("des enfants"). Stockmar's son felt that this discrepancy could be resolved by comparing Louis Philippe's version with that of Guizot, and with one of Stockmar's memorandums.²⁵

All of which is directed toward the idea that the English were only bound not to "acknowledge and support," [*italics by Stockmar's son*] as England's candidate for the hand of the Queen of Spain, any prince not a Bourbon, especially Leopold of Saxe-Coburg. Later, when acrimonious

²⁴Ibid., p. 141. Cf. Longford, Victoria: Born to Succeed, p. 187. In this version Aberdeen, who had set out to manage the French with tact and suavity, agreed at the breakfast table to a bargain: England would not push Leopold's candidacy, if Louis Philippe would not advance one of his own sons.

According to Longford, Louis Philippe again confirmed the arrangements as Victoria and Albert were sailing away at the end of the visit. Supposedly, the French King leaned over the side of his yacht and agreed that Isabella would be left to her own free choice of a spouse from among the Spanish Bourbon princes, and the younger sister, the Infanta Fernanda Louisa, would be dealt with under a separate clause. Since Queen Isabella, left to her own devices, was almost certain to marry the supposedly impotent Francisco, Duke of Cadiz, this would mean the throne of Spain might fall to the heirs of the younger sister. Accordingly, Louis Philippe assured the British party that the marriage of his son, Montpensier, to the Infanta would only take place after Queen Isabella had produced an heir.

²⁵Ibid.

dispute had broken out over all this, the French insisted on a version which would make out that England had promised to actively promote the selection of a Bourbon, and, in addition, to oppose any other prince.²⁶

The younger Stockmar, working with his father's notes, concluded there can be no reasonable doubt that at Eu England never placed herself under obligation to actively oppose a non-Bourbon prince. If one follows this theory, based on Stockmar's papers, then the Agreement of Eu can be summed up in this way: France gave her promise not to marry Louis Philippe's son, Montpensier, to the Infanta until the Queen was married and had children. Secondly, England promised not to raise up and support any non-Bourbon prince for the hand of the Queen. The English Court, and the Ministers, would not recognize and support Leopold of Saxe-Coburg as official English candidate.²⁷

Further indication that the English made their promise in good faith and then kept it lies in the character of those who made up the English party at Eu. Lord Aberdeen was a man of character, and the strict sense of justice of Queen Victoria and the prudence and integrity of Prince Albert are well known.²⁸

²⁶Ibid., 143.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 143-146. Cf. Donald Southgate, The Most English Minister: The Policies and Politics of Palmerston (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), p. 131. Hereafter cited as English Minister. On February 27, 1846 the French charge d'affairs in London, Jarnac, read to Aberdeen a memorandum, of which no written copy was made available, that said that if the marriage of either the Queen of Spain or the Infanta to Leopold seemed "probable and imminent" France would regard herself as free of the agreement of Eu.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 146-147.

The French, nonetheless, showed, from this time forward, a great fear of the candidacy of Prince Leopold, and they frequently attempted to use this as an excuse to declare themselves free of the promises given at Eu. So when, in November, Guizot heard that Prince Leopold and his father, Prince Ferdinand, were going to visit the elder brother in Portugal and might enter Spain as well, he took it very much amiss. Guizot then claimed that constant intrigues were being carried out in Madrid that were based in Lisbon. There was, at least, something that served as solid ground upon which to build such suspicions. The English Ambassador in Madrid, Sir Henry Bulwer, was favorably inclined toward Prince Leopold.²⁹

The Tory Ministry had left office on June 29; Aberdeen was succeeded under the Whigs, by Palmerston.³⁰ The arrival in office of Lord Palmerston in 1845 infused some new elements into the matter of the Spanish marriages. The French, on the basis of his past performance, did not see Palmerston in a favorable light. He was considered, by both Louis Philippe and by

²⁹Ibid., pp. 147-148. Cf. Howarth, Citizen-King, pp. 299-300. Actually, it would seem that much intrigue had proceeded on the ministerial level in Madrid without recourse to the home governments involved. Bulwer was an imperious and ambitious diplomat. Queen Mother Christina, disliking all the Bourbon candidates, asked him tentatively about Leopold of Coburg. Bulwer then went beyond his authority and told her "that a marriage so reasonable and unobjectionable could not be persistently opposed by the King of the French." For this Aberdeen gave him a severe reprimand. However, the French ambassador in Madrid, de Bresson, who strongly disliked Bulwer, also exceeded his authority. He was aware that the Queen Mother would agree, albeit unwillingly, to the marriage of Isabella and Cadiz, if the Infanta married Montpensier, since Bulwer's alternate candidate, Seville, was aligned with the Liberals. Seizing the moment, de Bresson told her that simultaneous marriages would be acceptable to France. He said this on his own authority, without consulting Guizot. He knew, of course, of the rumors of the impotence of Cadiz. Cf. Southgate, English Minister, p. 131-132. Aberdeen would not forbid the Coburg marriage, because the agreement at Eu had no legal status. Nonetheless, he intimated that Leopold of Coburg would get no help from England.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 148-156.

Guizot, as a troublemaker who was always disposed to oppose French influence anywhere.³¹ Despite all this, the first interviews between the French Ambassador and Palmerston seemed to hold some hope that the two countries might act in accord. Both seemed to agree that the best thing would be for the Queen of Spain to select one of her Bourbon cousins, the sons of Don Francisco de Paula. These two were the rather harmless Don Francisco, Duke of Cadiz; and the more restless, energetic Don Enrique, Duke of Seville. France would have preferred the bland, non-assertive Duke of Cadiz, but England was inclined toward the Duke of Seville.³²

Palmerston sent off his first dispatch to Bulwer on July 19, 1846:

Viscount Palmerston to Bulwer.

Foreign Office, July 19, 1846

There seem to be two questions, which at the present moment prominently attract the attention of those, who take an interest in the affairs of Spain. The one is the marriage of the Queen, the other is the political condition of the country.

In regard to the first question, I have not at present any instructions to give you, in addition to those which you have received from my predecessor in office. The British Government is not prepared to give any active support to the pretensions of any of the princes who are now candidates for the Queen of Spain's hand, and does not feel itself called upon to make any objection to any of them.

³¹Ibid., p. 157. Cf. Douglas Johnson, Aspects of French History (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 307-308. The suggestion here is that Guizot had always felt that Palmerston was behind the Coburg marriage possibility. Johnson doubts that Palmerston really intended a marriage between Leopold and Isabella, but states that he probably favored one between the Duke of Seville and Isabella, coupled to one between Leopold and the Infanta.

³²Ibid., p. 159. Cf. Reeve, Greville Memoirs (Second Part), III, 420. Greville indicates that Queen Isabella preferred Don Enrique. Cf. Southgate, English Minister, p. 131. Southgate says that the Queen Mother would not have her daughter marry Don Enrique, as he was associated with extreme Liberalism. On the other hand, Don Francisco was hideously ugly, a semi-imbecile, and believed to be impotent. Because of all this, Southgate feels the Queen Mother was willing to seek a non-Bourbon candidate.

The choice of a husband for the Queen of an independent country is obviously a matter with which the Governments of other countries are not entitled to interfere, unless there should be a probability that the choice would fall upon some powerful foreign State, that he would be likely to connect the policy of the country of his adoption with the policy of the country of his birth, in a manner that would be injurious to the balance of power, and dangerous to the interests of other States. But there is no person of this description among those who are now named as candidates for the hand of the Queen of Spain; those candidates being reduced to three, namely, the Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, and the two sons of Don Francisco de Paula. I omit Count Trapani and Count Montemolin, as there appears to be no chance of the choice falling upon either of them. As between the three candidates above mentioned, Her Majesty's Government have only to express their sincere wish that the choice may fall upon the one who may be most likely to secure the happiness of the Queen, and to promote the welfare of the Spanish nation. . . . 33

This dispatch concluded with a piercing criticism which deeply offended the Spanish Government. Palmerston deliberately read it to Jarnac, the French Minister in London, thus causing further offense. Jarnac pressed Palmerston for a written apology, but to no avail. Louis Philippe, in turn, sent Jarnac a bitter denunciation of Palmerston on September 15. A further repercussion was that de Bresson, French Minister in Madrid, apparently felt that he must now apply urgent pressure to bring about a marriage. This was followed on August 28 by a royal announcement of the Queen's forthcoming marriage.³⁴

Palmerston had played directly into Guizot's hands; he gave the French Ambassador in Madrid just what he needed to persuade Spain to act at once and in accordance with France's plans.³⁵

³³Ibid., pp. 161-162.

³⁴Reeve, Greville Memoirs, (Second Part) III, 7-9.

³⁵Herbert C. F. Bell, Lord Palmerston (2 vols.; London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1936), I, 379.

As his biographer suggests, in placing the name of Prince Leopold first on his list, Palmerston was not, as was later asserted, giving him the preferential position. All attempts to reach such intent into his words must fall to the ground when considered in relation to the passage that shortly follows them:

As between the three candidates Her Majesty's Government have only to express their sincere wish that the choice may fall on the one who may be most likely to secure the happiness of the Queen and to promote the welfare of the Spanish nation.³⁶

Louis Philippe had been insistent all along that the husband of the Queen of Spain must be a member of the House of Bourbon. Yet, the Queen Mother of Spain did not share this ironclad resolution. On the contrary, she decided, in 1846, that she would send a letter containing a proposal of marriage between Queen Isabella of Spain and Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg to the reigning Grand Duke of Saxe-Coburg, who was then visiting his relatives in Lisbon. This would represent a formal marriage proposal from the head of one house to the head of another.³⁷ The Queen Mother asked Sir Henry Bulwer to send this letter in the British diplomatic pouch by his own messenger. This was, it should be noted, simply a standing operating procedure. The dispatches of the Spanish Government were always allowed to travel in this manner. One thing that made Sir Henry seem even more involved was the fact that the Queen Mother told him what this letter contained. Sir Henry, of course, would not refuse a letter sent by the Queen Mother to the Grand Duke of

³⁶Pemberton, Lord Palmerston, p. 134.

³⁷Martin, Life of the Prince Consort, I, 351.

Saxe-Coburg. Nor would he present argument in opposition to a Coburg marriage since his home Government had already said that the Spanish Queen was free to marry as she thought best. Sir Henry, however, did mention to the Queen Mother that a Coburg marriage was not to be considered an English marriage, and, therefore, the English Government must not be counted upon to support it as if it were.³⁸

There seems little doubt that Sir Henry attempted to act according to the principle previously declared by his Government. Yet, with the French Government both jealous and suspicious, the British Government was placed in a most awkward position because of Sir Henry's private knowledge and seemingly prejudicial actions. Later on there was some reason to wonder whether Sir Henry had not been duped into thinking that the proposal was made in good faith, whereas it had, perhaps, been made with a view to setting Louis Philippe free of his promise to put off the Duke of Montpensier's marriage until the Queen of Spain had married and had children.³⁹ Apparently, Sir Henry remained convinced throughout that the Queen Mother was entirely sincere in the proposal. One can not be entirely certain on this point. Bulwer had been strongly impressed with the advantages of a Coburg marriage for Spain, and was, perhaps, too strongly committed by his inside knowledge of the proposal to remain a truly impartial judge. In his Life of Lord Palmerston (pp. 220-225) he admits that he felt a great pity toward the Spanish princess who, he felt, was about to be sacrificed. He strongly resented what he regarded as the heartless way in which this sacrifice was demanded. He also had a great

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

interest in the welfare of Spain, herself. For all these reasons he seems to have agreed with the choice the Queen Mother indicated in her Coburg proposal. He seems to have made an error in judgment in supposing that his personal preference would also be that of the English Court.⁴⁰

The knowledge to which Bulwer had been privy had been kept secret from the French Ambassador in Madrid, M. Bresson. But as soon as Lord Aberdeen found out from Bulwer what had happened, he told the French Minister, and gave him his assurance that this proposal had been made without the knowledge or agreement of the British Government.⁴¹

The controversial letter, which the Queen Mother wrote in May, was received by Grand Duke Ernst as he was preparing to leave for England. Accordingly, he put off a reply until such time as he could discuss the matter in England. Unfortunately, his arrival in England coincided with the ministerial crises of late June, 1846. Therefore, an answer had to be deferred until Ernst had consulted with his English relatives, King Leopold of Belgium, and the new British Government. From all quarters came the answer that the proposal must not be accepted. It was declined, principally on the grounds that injury was likely to be done to Spain's interests if Louis Philippe were to be antagonized in this way. The French Government were informed of this decision, and so lost any pretext for doubting the good faith of the British Government or of the House of Coburg. Thus it may be seen that in his dispatch Palmerston

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 351-352.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 352.

⁴²Ibid.

confirmed the policy of his predecessor--Britain had no official candidate, no special preference, yet, considering the interests of Spain, she felt Don Enrique, Duke of Seville, most eligible.⁴³ Spain, however, had taken direct measures to include Prince Leopold among the candidates. Guizot, of course, intended that the Infanta should marry Montpensier. This he hoped to establish secretly and then, when the marriage of Queen Isabella and the Duke of Cadiz was an established fact, there would be a formal, open, definite decision. Louis Philippe agreed with all this as long as the marriage of the Queen was to have taken place first.⁴⁴

On August 28 the simultaneous marriages were arranged. Guizot then had an interview with the British Ambassador, Lord Normanby, on September 1. He told Normanby that the Queen of Spain's marriage with the Duke of Cadiz was now settled. Further, he added, the Queen of Spain would, at the same time, give her consent to the marriage of Montpensier and her sister, the Infanta. "At the same time?," Normanby asked, rather

⁴³Stockmar, Memoirs of Baron Stockmar, II, 165.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 166-170. Cf. Reeve, Greville Memoirs (Second Part), III, 11. Greville was of the opinion that Louis Philippe and Guizot may not have been acting in concert, and that the intrigue was solely the King's. However, Greville's opinions are sometimes unsound, as his editor admits. Cf. Bell, Lord Palmerston, I, 380. Bell indicates there is some ground for believing that Louis Philippe was backing Guizot in all this, but that the King did wish to disavow simultaneous marriages. It was acceptable to the King that the Spanish Marriages should feature a Neapolitan Bourbon and his son, Montpensier, but there should be a formal disavowal of simultaneous marriages. Guizot tried to persuade his King to relent from this position, and was delighted to learn from de Bresson that simultaneous marriages involving Cadiz and Montpensier had been arranged. Guizot was more to blame than was the King. Cf. Howarth, Citizen-King, p. 301. Apparently, Louis Philippe did not believe the rumor that Cadiz was impotent, and hence was not certain that his son's heirs would come to the Spanish throne. The French King told his Queen:

It seemed to me certain from the information, of a very detailed character, which was collected in Madrid on Don Francisco d' Assiz [meaning Cadiz] that he was in a good condition of virility.

startled. "Not at the same time; the marriage will not take place at the same time," was Guizot's reply. Two days later Lord Normanby showed Guizot the report of this conversation which he had made to send to the British Government. Guizot made no comments or protests of its inaccuracy. Yet, on September 24, when the British Ambassador again alluded to his report, Guizot disclaimed the conversation, but later admitted he had said something along those lines, but had only meant to convey that the Queen's marriage would happen first, she would be the first bride given away.⁴⁵

Louis Philippe was embarrassed before the British Court. He had been trying for years to build the entente cordiale between France and Britain by means of personal bonds of friendship with the British Royal Family. Now, he was caught in a dilemma. How could he, as a supposedly devoted friend, give Queen Victoria the news that at the same time that the Queen of Spain was betrothed, her sister was engaged to his son? In short, he had broken the promise he had personally made to her.⁴⁶ Choosing a course sometimes favored by husbands, he hid behind his wife's skirts. Queen Marie Amélie would tell the story to Queen Victoria. The idea was that the French Queen, without benefit of preliminaries, would let Victoria know of the coming Montpensier-Spanish marriage as if it were an entirely accidental, unforeseen, lucky event, which would probably come as a charming surprise!⁴⁷

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 175-176.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 176-179.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 182. The texts of these letters appear in Memoirs of Baron Stockmar.

On September 10, 1846 Queen Victoria sent her answer to Queen Marie Amélia, and this, in turn, caused the King of the French to also write to his daughter in an attempt to excuse his conduct. He hoped that this letter's contents would then be sent on to England. The line that Louis Philippe took was to try to switch the guilt and accuse England of being the party who had not kept good faith. The only support he could offer for his claim was to cite Palmerston's dispatch of July 19.⁴⁸ Naturally, this hardly met with a cordial reception in England. On September 27 Queen Victoria sent a long, decided, and conclusive reply to the Queen of the Belgians. In it she declared herself completely unconvinced by Louis Philippe's attempts at explanation. Victoria firmly asserted that what had occurred was in violation of the promise the French King had given to her at Eu. To Victoria's way of thinking, that promise was still in force; Louis Philippe had in no way been released from it. She completely denied that the English Court or Ministry had in any way aided the candidature of Prince Leopold of Coburg. In addition, it was a total distortion of Lord Palmerston's dispatch to attempt to deduce from it a proposal or a recommendation for this candidature. Finally, she posed the question, "If the King entertained doubts of our integrity, why did he not try to have them cleared away before acting as he has done?"⁴⁹

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 183-184.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 185. Cf. Reeve, Greville Memoirs (Second Part), III, 11. Greville mentions the story that Normanby declared the two countries, England and France, could never be the same again in their relations, unless Guizot were expelled from office and England was informed of a renunciation by the Duchess of Montpensier. Greville doubted the whole story. Cf. Bell, Lord Palmerston, I, 384. This must have been particularly trying to the sensitive Queen of the Belgians, for her husband, King Leopold, privately expressed indignation along the same lines as that of Victoria.

Nothing, however, thwarted the French plans. The Spanish marriages were carried through under French influence to become the guiding star of Louis Philippe's foreign policy. The ceremonies took place on October 10; they were not simultaneous, but close together.⁵⁰ The result in England was enmity and a continuing disfavor for France in public opinion.⁵¹ Even the usual animosity between Queen Victoria and Palmerston was temporarily suspended as the Queen, sickened at the thought that Louis Philippe had tricked her and forced an impossible groom on the Queen of Spain, backed her Minister fully. Prince Albert was also enraged.⁵² In fact, the British Foreign Office with the active assistance of Prince Albert attempted to solicit declarations from the other great powers stating that treaty obligations, especially the Orléans renunciation at Utrecht, would automatically bar any Montpensier heirs from the Spanish throne. It was a vain attempt.⁵³

This was a battle lost for Coburg in the perpetual clash of dynastic ambitions, but great things still lay in store. Prince Leopold had a nephew, Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Kohary, who was the grandson of that Ferdinand who was the brother of King Leopold of Belgium and of Grand Duke Ernst I of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. It would be this boy who would carry the family banner, and eventually, sit upon yet another throne.

⁵⁰Bell, Lord Palmerston, I, 385.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 201-203. Cf. Pemberton, Lord Palmerston, p. 136. Pemberton points out that, all previous rumors to the contrary, the Queen of Spain did have children. However, Pemberton raises a doubt as to whether her husband was really the father.

⁵²Bell, Lord Palmerston, I, 383.

⁵³Ibid., I, 386.

VIII. A BALKAN ADVENTURE

The Coburgs had done well in northern Europe, but had not been entirely successful in the Iberian Peninsula. The next area of interest was to be the Balkans. The Prince Ferdinand, who now became the next Coburg to attain a throne, the son of Prince Augustus of Saxe-Coburg-Kohary, was the grandson of that Prince Ferdinand who was the younger brother of King Leopold of Belgium and of Grand Duke Ernst I of Saxe-Coburg. He was also the second cousin of that Ferdinand of Coburg who became King of Portugal, and also of both Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Born February 26, 1861 in Vienna, the city wherein the Coburgs first married into the Koharys, Prince Ferdinand's mother was a daughter of Louis Philippe and the Princess Clémentine of Bourbon-Orléans. Ferdinand was strongly attached to his affectionate mother, who was often called by her own brother, the Duke of Aumale, "Clémentine of Médici." She was a woman of strong character and considerable diplomatic skill, who spent much time and energy in attempting to aid the restoration of her house to the throne of France. Though not born a Coburg, she fitted into the family traditions beautifully for, like the old Dowager Grand Duchess Augusta, she was forever dreaming of the brilliant careers that she hoped would be built by her dutiful sons. Ferdinand was her pet, the apple of her eye, the one for whom she foresaw a king's throne.¹

Ferdinand's father, though an Austrian general, led a somewhat withdrawn life, and never drew much attention to himself. Yet, Prince Ferdinand did not lack for impressive royal examples and inspirations

¹Madol, Ferdinand of Bulgaria, p. 22.

among his near relatives. His uncle, bearer of the same Christian name, had married the Queen of Portugal, becoming, himself, a king. In addition Ferdinand paid many childhood visits to his grandmother, who, though then in exile, had once been Queen of the French.

Another visit that fired the young Coburg's imagination occurred when he reached the impressionable age of fifteen. It was then that he was taken to see Leopold II, King of the Belgians, at Laeken Palace.² It was during this visit that Ferdinand, for the first time, gained a realization of the immense and complicated political problems of the world. The sensitive young prince was so powerfully impressed with the lessons he learned during this visit to his Coburg cousin over fifty years later, despite arguments that arose between the two, Prince Ferdinand remained under the influence of the diplomatic skill of Leopold.³

There were other Coburg family visits that helped to shape the character and outlook of the young prince. Ferdinand made a voyage to Brazil where his brother, Prince Augustus, married to the Princess Imperial, daughter of the Emperor, served as Admiral of the Fleet. From early boyhood Prince Ferdinand had been an avid collector of flowers, animals, and butterflies. His skill had been such that he was elected an honorary member of the Ornithological Society in Vienna because of his work on an unknown species of birds. Now, in Brazil, he became a scientific explorer. Later, he participated in an expedition into northwest Africa. The results of these explorations were published under the title Itinera Principum S.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 23.

Coburgi, thus giving the Saxe-Coburg name a scientific gloss to add to its royal radiance.⁴

In addition to his scientific activities, Ferdinand learned several modern languages. The boy was gifted in several directions, but it was his mother's driving ambition, communicated to her son, that drove him forward.⁵ A contemporary gave this description of the Prince:

Like many other scions of the House of Coburg he [Ferdinand] was intellectually very gifted and undoubtedly of the stuff that successful princes are made of. In versatility, broadness of outlook, and fineness of intellect, he surpassed most of the monarchs of his time, but during his several years of service in the Austrian army he had been an indifferent officer of hussars. Prince Ferdinand regarded a horse as his personal enemy.⁶

It was during an official trip, undertaken on behalf of his family, that Prince Ferdinand met the man whose place he would soon take upon the throne of Bulgaria. Prince Alexander of Battenberg, who was the son of a morganatically married Hessian prince, had been elected Prince of Bulgaria on April 17, 1879, after Bulgaria gained a measure of freedom from the Turks.⁷ He was chosen by Bulgaria's First Grand National Assembly, which had convened for the purpose of electing a reigning prince. The terms of the Treaty of Berlin, which sanctioned Bulgarian self-government under a lingering shadow of Turkish suzerainty, set forth that the Prince must be elected by the people of Bulgaria, and he must be approved by

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Prince Bernhard von Bülow, Memoirs: 1897-1903 (4 vols.; London: Putnam, 1930), I, 154.

⁷Madol, Ferdinand of Bulgaria, pp. 19-21.

Turkey and the great powers.⁸ Battenberg was a nephew of the Tsar of Russia, a circumstance that had hardly acted as a stumblingblock to his election to the throne of the small, Slavic, Balkan country.⁹ Battenberg's candidacy met with the approval of all the great powers, and he was unanimously elected by the Grand Sobranje.¹⁰ Having been thus seated upon his Balkan throne, Prince Alexander hoped to rule according to his upbringing and inclinations--in other words, as an extreme reactionary. In fact, his first act as Prince was to undertake a journey to Russia for the purpose of convincing Alexander II that he should give his support to an abrogation of what Alexander called the "perfectly ridiculous Liberal Constitution." This was the Bulgarian Constitution in force in 1879. Over a period of several years Alexander made three different attempts to convince the Tsar that he should be allowed to suspend the Constitution, but they all failed because the Tsar did not want to endanger Russian popularity in Bulgaria. Naturally enough, such a program as Alexander's alienated Bulgarian liberals. At the same time, failure of his program made Battenberg more and more of a Russophobe. His drive toward autocracy, coupled as it became with his attempt to lessen Russian influence, received the encouragement of France, Germany, and Austria.¹¹

The meeting between Prince Alexander and Prince Ferdinand occurred at the Coronation of Tsar Alexander III in 1883. Since Tsar Alexander's

⁸Mercia Macdermott, A History of Bulgaria: 1393-1885 (London: George Allen and Unwin, Limited, 1962), pp. 317-325.

⁹Madol, Ferdinand of Bulgaria, pp. 19-21.

¹⁰Macdermott, A History of Bulgaria, p. 317.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 317-325.

predecessor had been murdered, the Coronation was an especially elaborate one in order that it might re-state the power and prestige of the Imperial House. There, amid the Byzantine pomp and glitter, the two men saw each other for the first time. Prince Alexander, relative of the Imperial House, was a martial, knightly figure. Prince Ferdinand, who was a member of the wealthy but collateral line of his house, wore a uniform that lacked a sword, and he looked to be, not a soldier, but a diplomat. He made a marked contrast to the glittering Alexander. Yet, though "Sandro" Battenberg was a dashing, handsome, willful individual, his seat on his Balkan throne was hardly a secure one. Bulgaria had gained her freedom with the help of Russia; the country was looked upon almost as if it were a province of Russia. This view was especially dear to the new Tsar. Prince Alexander could not have felt very secure after he received Bismarck's comments on the success of his Bulgarian prospects. Bismarck had told him that he certainly should accept the throne, and come what may, it would remain an interesting memory from his youth.¹²

The tide turned for Battenberg when Tsar Alexander II was assassinated in 1881. In the general atmosphere of repression that followed this act of violence, Tsar Alexander III was willing to go along with Prince Alexander's wishes. Although the Tsar did not actually consent in so many words, Prince Alexander left Russia persuaded that St. Petersburg would not object if he were to suspend the Constitution. Enroute back to Bulgaria, Alexander stopped off at Berlin and Vienna,

¹²Madol, Ferdinand of Bulgaria, pp. 19-21.

where his plans for autocratic government met with approval. Now he was ready. On April 27, 1881 he undertook a coupd' état. His difficulty came when he persisted in his opposition to the Russian influence. In 1884 he became aware of the fact that Russia hoped to dethrone him.¹³

Thus it was that when the two princes left Russia after the Tsar's Coronation, Prince Alexander was returning to a shaky throne--the throne he was soon to lose, while Prince Ferdinand returned to his mother at the Palais Coburg in Vienna to carry on his military and scientific studies--little realizing that he would soon replace Alexander upon the Balkan throne.¹⁴

It was in August of 1886 that Prince Alexander of Battenberg was physically attacked and captured in his palace and forced to leave Bulgaria. He was able to return in a day or two and seize back his throne, but having lost all Russian support, he soon realized that he could not maintain himself in power. Since it would not be possible for him to stay in Bulgaria in opposition to the Tsar, he set up a regency, abdicated, and left the country for good.¹⁵

A replacement was not long in appearing. In the same year Prince Waldemar of Schleswig-Holstein, brother of the Russian Tsarina, was elected Prince of Bulgaria. This was, from the outset, a mere gesture, as it was certain that he would refuse. The whole thing was done only to give evidence of continuing good will towards Russia. The Tsar would not give

¹³Macdermott, A History of Bulgaria, pp. 327-342.

¹⁴Madol, Ferdinand of Bulgaria, pp. 19-21.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 24.

his approval to Prince Waldemar, and the latter did, indeed, refuse the crown. Actually, he was not the first to decline. One of the Russian grand dukes had also bowed out of the picture.¹⁶

There were a number of other princes who were quite willing to become candidates for the Bulgarian throne. Prince Karl of Sweden, Prince Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar, and Milan of Serbia all stood ready. There was also an Austrian archduke and a prince of the House of Reuss who would have accepted a bid. None of them, however, could secure the backing of one of the great powers for their candidacy.¹⁷

Since all of the above named princes lacked what was regarded as the sine qua non for candidacy, interest began to focus more and more upon Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Kohary. It is said that the first encounter between Prince Ferdinand and the Bulgarian mission that was seeking a prince took place at the Ronacher Theatre in Vienna. Supposedly, this important delegation came to the Prince in Box 27. Yet, the truth of the matter seems to be that Prince Ferdinand had never even been inside the theatre. Instead, the man that the Bulgarians did meet at Ronacher Theatre was Major von Laaba, who was a close friend of the Archduke Johann. This archduke was the celebrated Johann Orth, who was also seeking a throne for himself. It cannot be denied that Major Laaba was also acquainted with Prince Ferdinand. Apparently, the first

¹⁶Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁷Ibid.

negotiations in which the Bulgarian throne was at least tentatively offered to Ferdinand happened at the Prince's office in the Seiberstätte in Vienna on December 13, 1886.¹⁸

Ferdinand did not jump at the chance and wrap up the deal then and there. It would seem that he had some of that same prudent caution that is evidenced in the careers of King Leopold, Prince Albert, and Ferdinand's own grandfather. So another meeting took place at Ebenthal, a castle of the Saxe-Coburg-Koharys, just on the edge of Vienna. During this session the Bulgarian delegation were presented to Prince Ferdinand's ambitious mother, Princess Clémentine. This, in turn, led to another meeting that took place during a trip that Ferdinand made to Italy, this time in the company of his French uncle, the Duke of Aumale. This time the Prince saw the Bulgarian official, Kaltschev. During all these sessions Prince Ferdinand's answer remained ambiguous. Since Bulgaria was left in uncertainty, an attempt was made to persuade Alexander of Battenberg to return from Darmstadt and have another try at the throne, but Alexander was having no more of Bulgaria.¹⁹

Throughout all these proceedings Archduke Johann continued to play a shadowy and uncertain role. He maintained a most lively interest in who was to sit upon the throne of Bulgaria. Although he recommended Prince Ferdinand for the throne, he still had some interest in it for himself, as well. Such was the Archduke's preoccupation with this issue

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 25-26.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 26.

that he aroused the ire of the Emperor Franz Josef, who had a deep dislike of the whole subject, and, because of this, Johann finally left the Austrian army.²⁰

Gradually, some elements of backing and support for Ferdinand's candidature appeared. On December 14, 1886 the Foreign Minister of Austria, Kalnoky, gave the German Ambassador in Vienna, Prince Reuss, his personal opinion in confidence. Kalnoky said:

. . .should the Mingrelier [a Russian candidate] withdraw, and should Prince Ferdinand, with the support of the Tsar of Russia, succeed in having his candidature proposed, I have nothing at all to suggest in opposition. I merely wonder that this spoilt young gentleman, who leads such a luxurious and easygoing existence, and who, furthermore, likes to move in the society of cultured people, should be prepared to condemn himself to exile in Sofia. He has no taste for fighting, but he is clever; and should he strive to achieve the essential harmony between Russian influence and Bulgarian independence, he will receive no opposition from this quarter.²¹

Prior to this, Ferdinand had let it be known that as one of the well-to-do Saxe-Coburg-Koharys he had adequate financial means, and that he felt confident that he had influential connections in Russia. This seemed to be borne out by his family relationship to Grand Duke Vladimir and others in the Imperial House. He thought he stood almost in a persona grata status with the Tsar. In addition, he had given Prince Lobanov, Russian Ambassador in Vienna, a report of his negotiations with the Bulgarians. Despite all this, Prince Ferdinand seems to have misread the feelings of the Tsar.²² The German Minister, von Bülow, reported from St. Petersburg on December 25:

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., p. 27.

When I mentioned this candidature to the Emperor, his Majesty observed: "La candidature est aussi ridicule que le personnage."

In explaining the reason for this show of irritation by Alexander III, Bülow went on to say:

Even during the Moscow coronation Prince Ferdinand was the target of innumerable witticisms and contemptuous remarks at the hands of the Emperor.²³

Even the head of the House of Coburg, Grand Duke Ernst II, was not an unqualified supporter of Prince Ferdinand. Ernst decided that his support for his relative must depend upon Bismarck's consent. Bismarck advised the Grand Duke to:

. . . decline to support the acceptance of the candidature offered to Prince Ferdinand. The undertaking will be launched against the advice of Austria and against the will of Russia, in my view, then, hopeless; and I fear that it would only increase Bulgarian complications, besides providing our Russian opponents with fresh material to promote anti-German tendencies of Tsar Alexander.²⁴

Before this letter was sent to the Grand Duke, Bismarck showed it to the Russian Ambassador, Count Schuvalov, as a gesture to underscore Germany's disinterestedness in Balkan affairs and her wish to continue cordial relations with Russia. This was followed by correspondence between Prince Ferdinand and Grand Duke Ernst, and between Ernst and Bismarck. Bismarck refused to take any sort of active part in the negotiations with Bulgaria.²⁵

Grand Duke Ernst was delighted to be the possessor of letters written by the Iron Chancellor. Later, he was to mention with great pride

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

his close association with the creator of the German Empire; but he had to accept the fact that he would not be able to aid Prince Ferdinand as indicated by this letter, which includes Bismarck's own corrections:

Berlin, 23 April 1887

To His Highness
the Duke of Coburg
Nice

Captain Campbell,
Sheet in four parts

has been shown to Count
Schuwaloff (cipher note
26/11 87)

(Bism.) There is
neither indication nor
probability that

- (1) His Highness the Duke,
Following my telegram of 15. inst., and after discussion with his Majesty the Emperor of your gracious letter of 12. inst., I have the honour to reply as follows to your Highness.
When the candidature of Prince Ferdinand of Coburg for the Bulgarian throne
- (2) was mentioned in December of this year for the first time, the Viennese cabinet issued a warning and the Russian Government adopted an attitude of blunt rejection. ~~As-far-as-I-knew~~ the feelings of these two to the Bulgarian question have undergone no change as far as the other Great Powers are concerned; and I see no reason why such should occur. ~~Hereever-I-am not-in-a-position~~ To inquire in Petersburg if such a change has taken place causes me misgivings, since, with regard to
- (3) The present mistrust of Germany there, a mere question in this direction would suffice to present our opponents with a welcome excuse to arouse fresh suspicions of German policy.

With regard to this state of affairs, I can only advise Your Highness to refuse to agree to the candidature offered to Prince Ferdinand. The undertaking would be launched against the advice of Austria and

(Bism.) and our opponents in Russia would receive new material with which to promote the anti-German tendencies of Emperor Alexander.

(4) against the will of Russia, and in my opinion hopeless; and I fear that it would only increase Bulgarian problems, ~~and that European peace might be seriously endangered.~~

I have the honour to be,
Your Highness'
Most humble Servant,
v.B²⁶

While the Grand Duke was corresponding with the Chancellor, Prince Ferdinand was conferring with his mother. Ferdinand found that the Coburg family were against any further progress in the affair of his candidacy. This did not stop Ferdinand; he communicated with the Bulgarians and told them that he would make his acceptance conditional upon recognition by the great powers, especially Turkey and Russia. Very soon it was brought home to the Prince that this was not possible. Neither Russia nor Turkey would agree. When it came down to this, Ferdinand, though discouraged, refused to give up his dream. He would not abandon his candidature. He took heart from the example of Carol of Romania who had previously accepted his throne without reassuring recognition. The only condition that Prince Ferdinand now placed upon his acceptance was a unanimous vote of confidence by the Bulgarian Parliament, the Sobranje. On July 7, 1887 this vote was taken and it succeeded.²⁷

²⁶Ibid., pp. 27-28.

²⁷Ibid., p. 29.

Prince Reuss, the German Ambassador to Austria, reported from Vienna on July 10:

Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Kohary paid a visit to Count Kalnoky [Foreign Minister] as soon as the latter had arrived from his stay in the country. The purpose of the interview was to announce his election. Count Kalnoky did not congratulate Prince Ferdinand, with a view to avoiding all appearance of regarding the candidature as that of the Austrian Court.²⁸

The German Ambassador had not been taken into the complete confidence of Kalnoky. It is true that Prince Ferdinand could not be viewed as an Austrian candidate, but in the course of secret negotiations, the Prince had very likely been given the impression that, actually, Austria did not look upon his candidature in quite so negative a fashion as officially seemed to be the case. Austria placed great value upon her own sphere of influence in the Balkans, and she saw Ferdinand's candidature as a possible opportunity.²⁹

The climate of opinion in Russia, however, was much colder. Schweinitz, the German Ambassador, on July 13 reported a conversation he had had with Giers, the Russian Foreign Minister. Giers called Ferdinand's election "a box on the ear for Russia." Tsar Alexander, having been told of this interview, remarked, in his handwriting, "A loathsome business!" At another time Giers said, "We shall never be able to recognize Ferdinand of Coburg." Yet, Ferdinand labored under the misapprehension that he had good friends in St. Petersburg!³⁰

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., p. 30.

Not long after this, Lord Salisbury asked the German Ambassador in London, Count Hatzfeld, if he knew that Milan, King of Serbia, looked upon himself as the appropriate candidate for Bulgaria's crown. It would seem that there was no quarter in which Prince Ferdinand's candidature was taken seriously. Still, Ferdinand pressed on stubbornly. He became a zealous student of the Bulgarian language. A Bulgarian student, Dimitri Stanciof, who was completing his program at the Viennese college, the Theresianum, became his tutor. Stanciof, a prominent Bulgarian, was in charge of decoding the many telegrams that came for the Prince, while Ferdinand, in great haste, prepared for his trip to Bulgaria.³¹

At this point Reuss again reported to Berlin, saying that Ferdinand had complained about the lack of support from the German Government. To this Bismarck replied, "Why should he complain; what do we care for Bulgaria? The Prince and Bulgaria, to us, are sans conséquence; Russia, on the other hand, is important." Continuing along this same line, on August 3 Bismarck sent off these instructions for the German representative in Sofia, in the event that Ferdinand should actually go there:

You are to regard Prince Ferdinand solely as an Hungarian officer en voyage prive, and to treat him as such.³²

Prince Ferdinand sent a private letter to the Tsar to sound out his attitude. A rather correct, conventional reply came back indicating that the Tsar had nothing to say against him personally, but his election as Prince of Bulgaria was illegal. This left Prince Ferdinand in a most

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

awkward situation. Russia simply would not accept him as ruler of Bulgaria. Germany was pledged to follow the Russian position exactly. Austria was forced to assume the same public position as her German ally. Turkey was too weak to do anything effective. Lord Salisbury indicated to Britain's Ambassador, Launay, that he certainly was not to be considered a sponsor of Ferdinand, but he also was unwilling to back a candidate that was overly pro-Russian. To the great powers, Bulgaria was a firebrand of the Balkans. Each power looked to her own interest, but paid little attention to the interests of Bulgaria.³³

Russia now put pressure upon Turkey so that she demanded that Prince Ferdinand should not be allowed to begin his journey to Bulgaria. Bismarck, on August 9, wrote, "Anything we could do in that way has already happened. To negotiate with the Prince over this matter is no task for the German Emperor. On the Bulgarian Question we are following the wishes of Russia." Franz Josef stepped into the picture, and told Prince Ferdinand that if he were to go to Sofia, he would have to resign his lieutenant's commission in the Honved Regiment. This action was taken by Ferdinand on August 8. Yet, despite this demand by the Austrian Emperor, Burian, Austria's representative in Sofia, was sent instructions which told him to help Prince Ferdinand quietly and privately if he should ask for aid.³⁴

At last, Ferdinand made the definite decision to leave for Bulgaria. He was going into a little known, partly civilized country with

³³Ibid., pp. 30-31.

³⁴Ibid., p. 31.

the full knowledge that he was entirely without official support, and that he would have to confront the opposition of the powers of Europe. He took with him a few supporters, most of whom he had not known long. He had no certainty that he would even reach Sofia, especially since at that time it was not accessible by railroad. To top all other evil auguries he had before him the previous failure of Alexander of Battenberg. Despite all this, he determined to go.³⁵

The journey began on August 10 in the greatest secrecy. For the first leg of the trip a railway carriage waited for Ferdinand at a discreet distance from any station. The Prince's luggage was sent ahead during the watches of the night. The members of the Coburg party proceeded in separate trains and by different routes. The Prince, himself, unobtrusive in a civilian suit, went by secondclass compartment to Orsova without being recognized. Then the news of his departure broke. Many admired the Prince for his courage in undertaking this dangerous journey, and, by doing so, flying in the face of the great powers. But it was generally supposed that the undertaking could not possibly succeed. The general opinion was that the whole drama must be ended by the protest issued by the Sublime Porte, since the Ottoman Empire still exercised suzerainty over Bulgaria. Another factor militating against Ferdinand's success was the fact that Russia insisted that the Sobranje that had chosen Ferdinand was, in itself, illegal. Then came news from the Wilhelmstrasse that the Prince of Coburg, in accepting the Bulgarian crown,

³⁵Ibid., p. 32.

was infringing the Treaty of Berlin. Rather pathetically, the only good wishes tendered to Ferdinand upon his departure were those of Austria's Crown Prince Rudolf.³⁶

At Orsova the Bulgarian state vessel, the Alexander, which had been a gift from the Tsar, waited to receive Prince Ferdinand. Already there were rumors that mines had been laid in the Danube to stop or destroy the vessel. Ironically, it was the same boat that had carried Prince Alexander of Battenberg home to Germany in defeat.³⁷

Friendly warnings were now pressed upon the Coburg prince. He was told that his life was in great danger. It was said that a torpedo-boat waited, concealed somewhere on the Danube, to trap him. On August 11 Ferdinand, undeterred, sailed down the Danube on the steamer Orient to intercept the Bulgarian yacht. The rendezvous took place at one o'clock. The Prince was greeted with great enthusiasm by the Bulgarians, and there, on the Bulgarian Yacht, he held his first privy council with Stambulov.³⁸

All plots came to naught. In the traditional coronation city of Trnovo, on August 13, Ferdinand I, Prince of Bulgaria took his oath to the Bulgarian Constitution and received the official welcome pronounced by the Exarch of the Orthodox Church. Perversly enough, a jarring note was struck almost at once, for at the entrance to the cathedral in Sofia, Archbishop Clement delivered a speech that bristled with threats to any

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., p. 33.

³⁸Ibid.

anti-Russian régime. This first indication of opposition was soon drowned out by the ovations Ferdinand received as he entered Sofia.³⁹

Although Prince Ferdinand's entry into Sofia took place on August 22, the German Consul-General in Bulgaria had been sure the Prince would choose August 18. The reason was that this date marked the birthday of the Austrian Emperor, Franz Josef, and the Consul thought that since all the various consulates were decked in flags on that day, Ferdinand would make his entry then so it would appear they were all joining in the official welcome.⁴⁰

Russia had done no more than to make an official protest against Ferdinand's enthronement. It did not seem probable that she would actually use warlike measures against recently freed Bulgaria. All the same, there had been some consideration given to the idea of sending the Russian General Ernroth to Sofia to serve as regent. It was even reported that Schuvalov had said, "It would be as well to land Ernroth at Varna and to place a Russian battalion at his disposal, whereupon the Coburg house of cards would collapse with some rapidity." Yet, in St. Petersburg it was fully appreciated that military pressure upon this Slavic sister state would offend the rest of Europe, especially since Prince Ferdinand had been granted his crown by the will of his subjects. That is why Russia hoped to make another power her catspaw in this matter. She well knew that up to this point Germany had been willing to align her policy with that of Russia. Turkey could not be counted upon to act because she

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

had reached such a state of decadent weakness that she feared Ferdinand, at the first wrong move, would declare full and final independence for Bulgaria, thus ending even the shadowy suzerainty Turkey retained. Bulgaria, herself, was very much alive to this possibility.⁴¹

After a long slumber the small Balkan nation was stirring. On August 14, Prince Ferdinand issued a proclamation to the Sobranje:

We, Ferdinand, by the Grace of God and by the will of the Nation, Prince of Bulgaria, do declare to Our beloved People that, having sworn a solemn oath before the great National Assembly in the ancient capital, We have assumed the reins of government which We undertake to control in accordance with the Constitution. Determined to employ all means in Our power to promote the greatness and fame of Our country, and prepared to dedicate Our life to its wellbeing, We consider it to be Our solemn duty, at a moment when We are about to occupy the throne, to express to the brave People of Bulgaria Our thanks, not only for the confidence that has been displayed to Us by electing Us Prince, but also for their patriotic and sagacious conduct throughout the difficult times in which Our country has existed. We thank, also, the Regents and Ministers for their wise conduct of affairs; to them We owe the maintainance of the independence and freedom of Our country. Long live Bulgaria! Bulgaria is free to exercise her rights!⁴²

Where Ferdinand went, his mother was not far behind. In a few weeks Princess Clémentine of Saxe-Coburg-Kohary arrived in Sofia to order the reigning Prince's household, and to aid her son with her diplomatic skill. Her charm of manner and charitable conduct won many friends.⁴³

Prince Ferdinand now set out to found a dynasty. He hoped that by marrying and establishing a fresh connection with some ancient royal

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 33-34.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 34-35.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 41-46.

house he might advance the day when he received foreign diplomatic recognition. For this purpose it was, at first, his hope that he might marry a British princess. By 1892 this dream proved incapable of realization. Britain did not want to offend the Tsar. Queen Victoria was good enough to invite her Coburg cousin to Balmoral, but she received him only as Prince Ferdinand of Coburg, not as Prince of Bulgaria.⁴⁴

Ferdinand's visit was not a great success on any level. Queen Victoria, in spite of the Coburg name and the fact that Prince Ferdinand was a son of her childhood playmate, "Gusti," could not stomach him. She thought of him as a sickly, effeminate fop.⁴⁵

On the other hand, Ferdinand's retinue contained at least one individual who left a rowdy impression in England. One night during the Prince's visit Lady Amptill heard a furious snarling and snorting outside her bedroom door. When she timidly looked out she found a gigantic Bulgarian asleep on the wool mat by the door. She double locked her door in great haste. As it turned out, her visitor was Ferdinand's body servant who had found his master's door-mat too hard, and so moved on to a softer one.⁴⁶

When it was obvious that Ferdinand would get no British bride, Victoria telegraphed to her daughter, the widowed Empress Frederick:

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 65-66

⁴⁵Longford, Victoria: Born to Succeed, p. 494.

⁴⁶Victor Mallet, ed., Life with Queen Victoria: Marie Mallet's Letters From Court, 1887-1901, by Marie Mallet (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968), pp. 64-65. Hereafter cited as Life with Queen Victoria.

Aunt Clémentine asks if you would receive Ferdinand if he came to Hamburg; may I say yes?

V. R. I.⁴⁷

Receiving this message, the Empress turned to Berlin for counsel, meanwhile wiring to her mother, "Hope to answer to-morrow." Her son, Kaiser Wilhelm II and his Chancellor, Caprivi, who was given to calling Ferdinand, "the present Prince of Bulgaria," felt that such an encounter was much too risky. They were also certain that they were not going to allow Ferdinand to marry a German Princess. Accordingly, Caprivi refused to receive Prince Ferdinand. In short order Kaiser Wilhelm vetoed any possibility that Ferdinand might marry Princess Clara or Princess Sophie of Bavaria.⁴⁸

As the Empress Frederick put it:

He [Ferdinand] wished to marry Carol [,] Theodore of Bavaria's daughter, a sweet and pretty creature, but I am sorry to say William interfered and spoilt the marriage. It is supposed the Russians said they would not have a German princess marry Ferdinand. I quite understand them not liking Ferdinand to console himself by founding a strong dynasty, because from their standpoint it makes it more difficult to end the dynasty by paying assassins to murder or kidnap as they did with poor dear Sandro.⁴⁹

Bismarck also told Ferdinand that he must wait. Then, when Bismarck visited Vienna, Ferdinand sent him a letter asking if he would receive him. Bismarck replied that, although he was leaving Vienna, he

⁴⁷Madol, Ferdinand of Bulgaria, pp. 65-66.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 66.

⁴⁹Arthur Gould Lee, ed., The Empress Writes to Sophie, Letters 1889-1901, by Victoria, Dowager Empress of Germany. (London: Faber and Faber, Limited, 1955), p. 141. Hereafter cited as Empress to Sophie.

would be willing to see the Prince in Munich. When Ferdinand joined Bismarck in Munich he asked him for his advice concerning his delicate position as ruler of Bulgaria. Bismarck counseled caution:

Be cautious and avoid anything in your policy that might fan the embers into flames. Pretend that you are dead. You have shown the world that you can swim; don't try to swim against the stream. Allow yourself to drift slowly, and keep your head above water as you have done up to the present. Your greatest ally is time--the force of habit; avoid everything which might irritate your enemies. If you don't provoke them, they can do nothing to you; and, in the course of time, the world will grow accustomed to seeing you on the throne of Bulgaria.⁵⁰

There remained the problem of a bride for Ferdinand. The girl he finally married was Marie Louis of Bourbon-Parma, daughter of the Duke of Parma, and sister of Zita, who would one day be Empress of Austria.⁵¹

This marriage was accomplished partly through the good offices of the Emperor Franz Josef. Despite earlier frictions, the old man now received the Prince officially in Vienna. The question of Ferdinand's marriage was discussed, even though there was no suggestion of a union with an Austrian archduchess. The name that was mentioned was that of a daughter of the deposed Duke of Parma, who was a member of the ancient Italian branch of the Bourbons. Since the Duke of Parma had holdings in Lower Austria, Franz Josef said he would see what he could do on Ferdinand's behalf.⁵²

Even after Ferdinand's suit had been accepted problems arose. The wedding had to be postponed because of a prolonged illness that overtook

⁵⁰Madol, Ferdinand of Bulgaria, pp. 66-67.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 86.

⁵²Ibid., p. 68.

the Prince. At last, on April 20, 1893, the wedding was celebrated at Pranoie. The bride, Princess Marie Louise of Parma, was twenty-three years old, a delicate rather melancholy girl. Her family were strict Roman Catholics, and this, too, created a problem. At the ante-wedding celebrations Stambulov, was urged to make a change in Bulgaria's Constitution. The Constitution set down that the throne heir must be brought up in the Orthodox faith. To this the Duke of Parma would not agree in any circumstances. Stambulov was placed in a very awkward position. An earlier announcement of a change in the Constitution had caused the greatest indignation in Russia, and this was reflected in the Russophile groups in Bulgaria. What might not another change bring? For the time being the Constitution would not be changed.⁵³

This wedding proved to be an extremely difficult one to accomplish because of the religious factor. Marie Louise would be granted permission to wed the Prince of Bulgaria on the explicit condition that their children must be raised in her own Roman Catholic faith. The Coburg and Parma families, in contracting this marriage, had told the Pope that this proviso would be strictly carried out.⁵⁴

Matters became complicated when, on January 18, 1894, a first son and heir, Prince Boris, was born to Ferdinand and Marie Louise.⁵⁵ Before the birth of this heir, terrorist elements had repeatedly sent notes that

⁵³Ibid., pp. 68-69.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 86.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 73-74.

threatened assassination of both mother and child.⁵⁶ The main problem, however, was that the Bulgarians wanted their future ruler to be a member of the Orthodox faith. Nevertheless, several family members insisted that the boy must be Roman Catholic. A meeting was held with the various members of the Coburg family, and Princess Clementine finally took up a stand in opposition to her relatives. She felt that personal considerations must be made secondary to the peace and happiness of Bulgaria. There followed long negotiations, and the upshot of it all was that the Pope declared himself ready to accept a compromise. He suggested that he would not oppose the Prince's conversion to the Greek-United Church, which was an Eastern rite church that accepted the primacy of the Pope. The Pope remained adamantly opposed to the Prince's confirmation in the Orthodox faith. On the other hand, the Bulgarians and the Russian Government were equally determined that Prince Boris must be of the ancient national religion.⁵⁷

Again, there were long negotiations, both within and outside Bulgaria. Finally, Prince Ferdinand addressed the Sobranje on November 6, 1895. He had decided that his son would be Orthodox. In the meantime, his wife had brought their second son, Prince Kyril, into the world. Prince Ferdinand had an audience in the Vatican on January 26, 1896 in order that he might make one last request to the Pope not to stand in the way of his son's conversion. The visit failed. The Pope had only one

⁵⁶Lee, Empress to Sophie, p. 163.

⁵⁷Madol, Ferdinand of Bulgaria, p. 87.

suggestion for Ferdinand, which he repeated over and over, "Abdicate, monseigneur, abdicate!"⁵⁸

On February 15, 1896 Boris, Prince of Tronovo, was confirmed in the Orthodox faith in Sofia. The ceremony was that of confirmation because the Orthodox Church accepted the Prince's previous baptism in the Roman Catholic Church. One of the child's sponsors was Tsar Nicholas. Pope Leo XIII responded by excommunicating Prince Ferdinand. This act was later annulled by the next Pope, Benedict XV. The excommunication caused Marie Louise to leave Bulgaria. She took with her her second son, Kyril, and the Court Chamberlain.⁵⁹

Prince Ferdinand in speaking to his relatives said:

I know that I have been expelled from the Western Church, which has cast its anathema upon me. But, from to-day, I shall turn my eyes towards the golden dawn of the Orient. This dawn will cast its rays over my House and over our work in Bulgaria.

It was at this same time that the official emissaries of the Tsar arrived at Ferdinand's Court in Sofia, bringing with them Russia's recognition of Ferdinand's position as Prince of Bulgaria.⁶⁰

After spending some time with her mother-in-law, Princess Clémentine, in Vienna Princess Marie Louise was persuaded that she should go back to her husband and son in Sofia. Although she did so, she did not

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 87.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 87.

⁶⁰Ibid.

live for long. Prince Ferdinand's children were reared by their grandmother, Princess Clementine. The strong willed old lady survived until 1907, when she died at age ninety.⁶¹

Prince Ferdinand married a second time. His betrothal to Princess Eleanore of Reuss-Köstritz was announced in January of 1907. Since Ferdinand's children had suffered a double loss, through the deaths of both their mother and grandmother, he hoped to give them a second mother. Princess Eleanore was chosen for this role on the advice of Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna. Princess Eleanore was not a young woman, but she had given evidence of the charity of her nature while working in Russian hospitals. It was hoped that her high and steady character would have a good influence on Ferdinand's household. Eleanore lacked the beauty that Marie Louise had been blessed with, but she did have those virtues that befit the duties of a ruling princess. She and Ferdinand were married before a throng of royal guests; among others, Grand Duke Vladimir, who represented Russia, and Prince August Wilhelm who was the German representative.⁶²

Unfortunately, there were difficulties over the question of religion again as Eleanore was a Protestant. It was Ferdinand, himself, who arrived at an ingenious and diplomatic solution for this problem. The religious ceremony was celebrated in the Roman Catholic Church in Coburg. The Protestant ceremony was scheduled for March 1 at Gera. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Sofia, Monseignor Menin, gave Ferdinand

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 98-104.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 112-113.

permission to contract a marriage with a Protestant if there would be no Protestant service. Stanciov and Bourboulon signed a document to this effect, on behalf of the Prince, after reaching a compromise that provided that in the Protestant service Prince Ferdinand would maintain a strictly passive attitude. Even though Prince Ferdinand had incurred the censure of the Roman Church because of the conversion of Prince Boris, he received communion, in secret, before his marriage. He had been through confession several days before with a priest in Vienna. This was all possible because in certain important cases ecclesiastical censures may be removed temporarily. This allows the person concerned to be reinstated in the Church for such period of time as is required for performance of a certain act. This privilege is called, "Absolvo te, cum reincidentia effecto secuto." In this way once his marriage had been celebrated the censures would once again fall upon Ferdinand.⁶³

This was not the end of the religious difficulties, for two days later, on March 1, the Protestant minister at Gera refused to hold his service because he had been told of Ferdinand's plan to withhold his sacramental response of "Yes." Again, a compromise was secured, but only after protracted negotiation. Instead of saying "Ich frage Dich, Prinz Ferdinand. . . ," and then "Ich frage Dich, Prinzessin Eleanore. . . ," the priest was to ask them jointly, "Ich frage Euch." To this, Eleanore only would answer "Yes." This was the way in which the Protestant service was conducted.⁶⁴

⁶³Ibid., pp. 113-114.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 114.

Ferdinand was a wily man with a subtle mind. To this was added a certain audacity. Like the other Coburgs, he knew how to plan, and how to exercise persistence until his plans were realized, yet he was not without that family sense of duty and affection. Near the end of World War I he realized that, having backed the losing side, his abdication would be necessary in order to save his dynasty in Bulgaria. He gave up his throne on October 4, 1918 and went into exile. He returned to the ancient family home--Coburg, and although he was offered the Schloss Ehrenburg as a home, he chose instead to live in the villa he had occupied in Coburg many years before his Balkan adventure.⁶⁵

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 262-263.

IX. THE TREE RE-PLANTED

The family "tree" of the House of Coburg was an ancient one, it had survived through all sorts of vicissitudes, yet during the lifetime of Queen Victoria the main branch, that which ruled over the home Grand Duchy of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha died out. In order to keep the line going, it became necessary to "graft on" one of the British branches of the House of Coburg.

The last member of the old, direct Coburg line to rule over the Grand Duchy was Ernst II, the elder brother of Albert, Victoria's Consort. Ernst II, who inherited the Grand Duchy in 1884,¹ was a man of great, though not very realistic, ambition. As did most Coburgs, he aspired to bigger and better things, even entertaining the idea at one point that he might be elected Emperor of Germany. Hoping to enhance his chances for such selection, the Grand Duke bought large and valuable estates in Austria. Always a pompous man, who fancied himself as something of a fashion plate, he was like his father in his appetite for willing women. Yet, despite these qualities, or perhaps because of them, he was very popular with his subjects. He won them to him by his liberality and charming manner. Unfortunately, although he had many mistresses and literally scores of illegitimate children, he had no legitimate heir.²

Naturally enough, Queen Victoria developed a considerable dislike for this relative whose standards were so much at variance with her own.

¹Alice, Princess of Great Britain, For My Grandchildren (London: Evans Brothers Limited, 1966), p. 85. Hereafter cited as Princess Alice.

²Ibid.

She especially deprecated the way in which Grand Duke Ernst constantly left his wife, the former Princess Alexandrine of Baden, alone. The Grand Duke, the Queen felt, was very selfish.³ When the Grand Duke died, in August of 1893, Queen Victoria characterized him as rather like Gladstone--a man who convinced himself that things were right when they were not.⁴

Grand Duke Ernst's death left open the position of reigning Grand Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. His nearest male relative was the eldest son of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.⁵ On the basis of past experience, it had become policy that the British Crown should be kept separate from that of any German state. This arrangement, which originally grew out of events in the reign of William III, and out of the settlement of the Hanoverian dynasty upon England's throne, had proved wise in 1866 when Prussia annexed Hanover during the course of the Seven Weeks War against Austria. Because of this background, when Grand Duke Ernst II died in 1893, without legitimate heirs, it was decided that the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) should give up his right of succession to the Grand Duchy in favor of his younger brothers.⁶

Prince Albert's second son, Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, therefore became Grand Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha in 1893.⁷ Prince Alfred was

³Roger Fulford, ed., Dearest Child: Letters Between Queen Victoria and the Princess Royal: 1858-1861 (London: Evans Brothers Limited, 1964), p. 177. Hereafter cited as Dearest Child.

⁴Longford, Victoria: Born to Succeed, p. 522.

⁵Princess Alice, p. 85.

⁶Ibid., pp. 82-84.

⁷Ibid., pp. 84-85.

actually raised, in accordance with Prince Albert's wishes, with the idea in mind that he would be Grand Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha in the event that Ernst II had no legal heir.⁸ Queen Victoria was especially devoted to this boy, even more so than to some of her other children, and this shows up throughout her correspondence.⁹ The Queen regarded "good Affie" as a better person than her own heir, the Prince of Wales, yet she did note in him a marked lack of tact.¹⁰ In fact, the boy's taciturn nature only increased as he grew older. Eventually it tended to obscure some of his better qualities.¹¹

When Alfred was only eighteen he was offered the throne of Greece after the abdication of King Otto of the House of Wittelsbach. This was the same throne that Leopold of Belgium nearly accepted. Once again a Coburg did not accept the Kingdom of the Hellenes; Alfred refused the throne, mainly because of the opposition of the British Government.¹²

In 1874 Alfred married the Grand Duchess Marie, the only daughter of the Tsar of Russia, Alexander II. To this union were born four daughters and one son. The oldest daughter, Marie, eventually married King Ferdinand of Rumania, thus infusing a strong strain of Coburg blood into another Balkan monarchy. The second daughter was Victoria Melita, who married the Grand Duke Ernst of Hesse, only to divorce him and later

⁸Longford, Victoria: Born to Succeed, p. 172.

⁹Fulford, Dearest Child, p. 30. As noted by the editor.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 73, 139, 235, 237, 295.

¹¹Ibid., p. 30.

¹²Princess Alice, p. 87.

marry Grand Duke Kyril of Russia. The third girl, Alexandra, married the Prince of Hohenlohe-Langeburg, who became Regent of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha upon the death of his father-in-law and during the minority of the next Grand Duke. The last daughter, Beatrice, married Don Alfonso, Infante of Spain. Grand Duke Alfred's only son, Alfred, died at the age of twenty-five, without heirs, of tuberculosis, in February of 1899.¹³

On the death of young Prince Alfred his aunt, the Dowager Empress Frederick wrote to her daughter:

I am sure you feel deeply for poor Uncle Alfred and Aunt Marie in their overwhelming grief. Those poor unhappy parents! What must their feelings be, with their life and future so bound up with their son! I am so miserable about it. . . . the only son!¹⁴

Subsequently, the Empress attempted to explain, or perhaps to avoid explaining, the delicate matter of the death of young Alfred:

I know how shocked and grieved you would be at the death of your poor cousin. It is indeed terrible, terrible. You ask after the cause. It is true that he was giddy and wild, as many young men alas are, and that he contracted an illness, of which I know next to nothing, as I have never asked or heard anything about it, one dislikes thinking about it, and still more writing about it. This was neglected, and the poor boy led a dissipated life besides. Potsdam!--that was not the place for him. He was too inexperienced and heedless and giddy to resist temptations, bad examples, etc. Is it not all too miserable! I loved that boy, there was something irresistibly taking about him. He was one of those who are not fit to take care of themselves, not from evil disposition but from weakness of character.¹⁵

¹³Ibid., p. 87. Cf. Longford, Victoria: Born to Succeed, p. 551

¹⁴Empress to Sophia, p. 296.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 297.

In 1893, when Alfred became Grand Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, he inherited from his predecessor the large estates in Austria, as well as some that were in Poland. The new Grand Duke found that the financial affairs of his state were in considerable confusion, which was made worse by the pensions that had to be paid to the numerous mistresses and children of Ernst II.¹⁶

Alfred's sister, the Empress Frederick wrote:

Uncle Alfred has a great deal of trouble with his inheritance, as poor Uncle Ernst's money matters were in a dreadful mess, and he has had to cut down and reduce the expenditure in every way. With care and prudence and great self-denial things will come round in a few years, but there are tremendous debts to pay off. The fortune is in fact a very fine one, and if properly managed and looked after, ought to be very large.¹⁷

Alfred was a man who enjoyed his comforts and was fond of sports and liquor, but he did not include financial ability among his attributes. He was not the best man to restore financial order to the Grand Duchy.¹⁸ As he grew older, the Grand Duke became more and more alcoholic. He proved difficult to live with, and it was felt by relatives that he was a bad influence upon his children, yet his children were devoted to him.¹⁹ These surviving children were, however, all girls. It was necessary to turn again to the British Royal Family to find a Coburg who

¹⁶Princess Alice, p. 86.

¹⁷Lee, Empress to Sophia, p. 152.

¹⁸Princess Alice, p. 86.

¹⁹Ibid.

could be heir to the Grand Duchy. Arthur, Duke of Connaught, seemed the likely heir, but Connaught declined this inheritance both for himself and for his heirs. He did not relish having to deal with the financial affairs of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. It would seem, though, that the main reason for Connaught's denial of the title rested with Queen Victoria. The potentially vacant Grand Ducal throne led to dispute within the Queen's family, and her powers as mediator were sorely tried.²⁰ The Queen sent a letter to Sir Robert Collins, Comptroller to Princess Helen of Waldeck, Duchess of Albany, which indicated that her favorite son, Arthur, would be prevented from leaving England by his military duties. Connaught's young son, Prince Arthur, she went on, could not travel to Germany alone, nor could he undergo a separation from his family. It followed, then, that Prince Charles, son of the deceased Leopold, Duke of Albany, would, as next male heir, have the Grand Ducal title. This boy would have to be trained for the position.²¹

The boy thus selected to re-plant the Coburg family tree was the son of one of Queen Victoria's most unfortunate children, Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany. Leopold had been born with a defect in his throat, and, hence, in his speech.²² He also suffered from haemophilia, the dreaded royal bleeder's disease. As a child, he had to play very carefully for fear that he might bruise himself, and thus set off uncontrollable

²⁰Longford, Victoria: Born to Succeed, p. 552.

²¹Princess Alice, p. 84.

²²Fulford, Dearest Child, p. 153.

hemorrhaging.²³ Queen Victoria's letters give evidence of the suffering endured by this child and his family:

Balmoral Castle, September 2, 1859

Leopold still has such constant bad accidents that it would be very troublesome indeed to have him here. He walks shockingly--and is dreadfully awkward--holds himself badly as ever and his manners are despairing. . . .poor child, he is really very unfortunate. . . .²⁴

Osborne, May 31, 1861

Tomorrow Papa insists on our going to town for no earthly reason but that tiresome horticultural garden--which I curse for more reasons than one--and have to leave poor little, sick Leopold behind here--in his bed which makes me sadly anxious, and adds to my low spirits! They say there is no danger whatever at present, but I own think it both cruel and wrong to leave a sick child behind, when I have nothing to do till the 19th. . . .²⁵

Buckingham Palace, June 8, 1861

Dearest child! That Wednesday evening when the bad news of poor darling Leopold arrived was a terrible moment for me! I thought we should have another dreadful journey down [because they expected his death]! But God was very merciful! and I trust He will continue to protect the little fellow. Surely he must be meant for some great things to have been spared in the midst of such frequent illness! . . .²⁶

Of all her many children it was Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse, and Leopold who appeared in the pictures in the locket that Queen Victoria always wore.²⁷ As a man, Leopold had a pale complexion, a goatee,

²³David Duff, The Shy Princess (London: Evans Brothers, Limited, 1958), p. 47.

²⁴Fulford, Dearest Child, p. 208.

²⁵Ibid., p. 336

²⁶Ibid., p. 340.

²⁷Marie Louise, Princess of Great Britain, My Memories of Six Reigns (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1957) p. 111. Hereafter cited as My Memories.

and an air of detached melancholy that set him somewhat apart. It was, perhaps, something of a surprise, even to him, that he had survived beyond childhood. His life was one of restrained desperation in which he had to put up with the forceful manifestations of Queen Victoria's devotion and concern for him. He had to go with her almost everywhere that she went. She hovered over him constantly during his frequent seizures of illness. When he was well she took charge of his life.²⁸

Perhaps because he appealed to the maternal instinct, Leopold was popular with the ladies. This bothered Queen Victoria. Yet, after 1875 Leopold managed to find ways to get around London on his own to make friends. He was the discoverer of Lily Langtry, to whom he was much devoted. It was said that Queen Victoria was observed in the act of removing Mrs. Langtry's portrait from where it hung above the Prince's bed with her own hands.²⁹

To absorb his interest, Queen Victoria came to the conclusion that Leopold required some useful employment which would keep him occupied. Henry Ponsonby, her secretary, was told to find some of the State papers from her daily boxes that Leopold might study. Leopold was then obliged to copy these off like a schoolboy, in spite of the fact that he fully realized that the ultimate destination of his efforts would be his mother's wastebasket.³⁰

²⁸E. E. P. Tisdall, Queen Victoria's Private Life: 1837-1901 (New York: The John Day Company, 1962), p. 123.

²⁹Ibid., p. 124.

³⁰Ibid.

This scheme tended to make Leopold unpopular because, although he apparently did not always fully understand the sense of these documents, he took to discussing them with some of the political figures involved. His unsolicited advice and the breach of confidence that made it possible were not appreciated.³¹

Even though Leopold did not live much beyond this point, in the last part of his life he gained a measure of liberty and happiness. In 1882 he married Princess Helen of Waldeck and Pyrmont, a willful and determined young lady who was, herself, thought to be largely responsible for this event. Although Helen did not share the common awe of the Queen, Queen Victoria recognized in Helen the quality of resolution that would enable her to look after Leopold.³²

The couple had two children: Alice, who later married the Earl of Athlone; and Charles Edward, who eventually became the Grand Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha in 1900.³³

As had been long feared, Prince Leopold finally died of hemophilia.³⁴ It happened suddenly at Cannes, France in March of 1884.³⁵ Prince Leopold's widow was not at all happy to learn that Queen Victoria

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³David Duff, ed., Victoria in the Highlands (New York: Tappan Publishing Company, 1968), p. 358.

³⁴Marie Louise, My Memories, p. 121.

³⁵Duff, Victoria in the Highlands, p. 358.

had selected her son to re-plant the Coburg family tree. "I have always tried to bring Charlie up as a good Englishman," she complained, "and now I have to turn him into a good German." Yet, the Duchess had an exacting sense of duty, and it was probably this that forced her to respond to the Queen's wishes. Charles would accept.³⁶

Queen Victoria, the Duchess of Albany, and others in the Royal Family felt that Charles should be taken out of Eton and sent to Germany so that he could be educated for the title that would one day be his. Grand Duke Alfred, now that Charles was his heir as well as his nephew, wanted to adopt the fatherless boy, but the Duchess of Albany, who feared the influence of Grand Duke Alfred's growing alcoholism, refused. Instead of allowing Prince Charles to live with Alfred and his family, Duchess Helen suggested that the Grand Duke of Coburg should give a home to herself, her daughter Alice, and Prince Charles in which they could live together in Germany as a family. This the Grand Duke would not do. Faced with this refusal, Duchess Helen and her children moved into a suite in the palace in Württemberg that was made available to them by their "uncle," King William of Württemberg. Besides the friction over quarters, Prince Charles had difficulty in making the adjustment from Eton to his new German program of study.³⁷

The education of the Prince was also the cause of a family row between the Duchess of Albany and her sister-in-law, the Dowager Empress Frederick of Germany. The Empress was inclined to meddle, and she felt

³⁶Princess Alice, p. 84.

³⁷Ibid., p. 88.

that Duchess Helen should send Prince Charles to a school in Frankfurt which had the reputation of being very modern. The boy's uncle, Grand Duke Alfred, on the other hand, wanted his heir to attend a school near Reinhardsbrunn, which Princess Alice of Albany has described as "a horrid scruffy place." This also was refused by the boy's mother. Duchess Helen was a very determined woman who could even stand up to Queen Victoria, when the occasion demanded it. Finally, Kaiser Wilhelm II made arrangements for Prince Charles to attend the Leichterfelde military cadet school, the German approximation of Sandhurst. Because of the Kaiser's influence the boy was permitted to be part of a small special class of selected cadets who were given a broader education than was the rule. The Kaiser also gave Duchess Helen and Princess Alice the use of the Villa Ingenheim so that they could live near him while Charles was in the school.³⁸

Grand Duke Alfred ruled over Saxe-Coburg-Gotha until his death in 1900. Since at that time his imported heir, Prince Charles, was still a minor, the Prince of Hohenlohe-Langeburg, who was married to the late Grand Duke's third daughter, was made Regent of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.³⁹

In 1905 Grand Duke Charles came of age, and a party to celebrate this fact was held in Coburg. Subsequent to this Charles would be given the reins of government from Prince Hohenlohe. At the party the young Grand Duke's British relations met many strangers who bowed and curtsied

³⁸Ibid., p. 90.

³⁹Ibid., p. 87.

to them and greeted them familiarly. These, they were informed, were some of the illegitimate offspring of Ernst II, Der Lieber.⁴⁰

Grand Duke Charles retained the title through World War I, and although the Grand Duchy of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha ceased to be a legal entity, Charles was still Grand Duke when the Nazi era arrived. Charles became a Nazi.⁴¹ The Coburgs had come full circle from the days when they danced attendance upon Napoleon.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 85-86.

⁴¹Longford, Victoria: Born to Succeed, p. 552.

X. CONCLUSION

The tiny Grand Duchy of Saxe-Coburg seemed insignificant, but the quality of the scions of the House of Coburg brought it to the heights. Although the first Ernst and Leopold had something of the playboy in their makeup, they had a sense of duty to their House, and brains and persistence as well. They were opportunists, they knew how to take the tide, but they were something more as well--they had the ability to plan, to scheme, to create their own "luck" (supra, I). Of the two brothers, Leopold began with the poorer position, that of second son. Yet, early on he displayed his abilities as a schemer and the first beginnings of what would later be a mastery of the fine art of statecraft (supra, I, IV). His brother recognized this talent and entrusted Leopold with the family fortunes at the Congress of Vienna (supra, I). After that, Leopold used his powers, his persistence, and a patience that allowed him to lie low and then rise to seize the moment, with the final result that he became a king and founded a new branch of the House of Coburg in Belgium (supra, II, III, IV).

Not content to simply sit upon a throne and wear a crown, Leopold was determined, despite formidable constitutional stumbling-blocks, to be a real king as well. This he accomplished in a subtle, clever, calculating way, yet, with little friction or damage to his state (supra, IV).

The Coburgs were fortunate in having the devoted assistance of Baron von Stockmar. Leopold, Stockmar, and Albert, together, "took" the British throne. There was no villainy in this, no attempt to destroy the Constitution. In nearly all cases the Coburgs worked in "inside" ways, using influences that seldom came to public notice. The influence the

Coburgs gained in England was based largely upon familial piety and the quality of charm that so many Coburgs exercised. These two elements were employed artfully by Leopold and by Albert with considerable help and guidance from Stockmar (supra, V).

When the Coburgs, on their second attempt, gained their position of influence in England they became a European "power." Queen Victoria considered herself "a Coburg" (supra, V). This was the acme of Coburg power and prestige, yet lateral expansion continued.

The Portuguese Marriage was not a spectacular thing, but it encouraged the Coburgs to try to emulate the Habsburgs and secure a Spanish seat as well as a German one. In this they failed, but the failure was not loss, only the absence of gain, their influence elsewhere continued unabated (supra, VI, VII).

Only the most wily of royalty have met with any great measure of success or permanence in the Balkans. The dynasties of Habsburg, Obrenovitch, Pietrovitch-Niegush, Karageorgevitch, Zogu, Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, Wittlesbach, and Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderborg-Glücksborg have all experienced tremendous difficulty, many tragedies, and eventual expulsion in this turbulent area. Yet, "Foxy" Ferdinand was able to hold his own with the best of them. He founded a new branch of the House of Coburg in Bulgaria despite enormous odds. Though he later abdicated, his dynasty endured until the coming of the Communists (supra, VIII).

Considered as a group or as single individuals, the Coburgs make a fascinating study. Starting without great power or prestige they were able to rise to the heights, not just in one country, but in several. From their acquired positions of eminence their influence upon history

has been considerable, so much so that it is beyond the scope of this paper which deals with their acquisition of position and prestige. Although there ceased to be a legal reigning Grand Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha after World War I, the Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld branch of the family continues to occupy the throne of Belgium, the British Royal Family are of Coburg blood, and Simeon II, exiled King of Bulgaria, continues to provide a focus for the hope that the House of Coburg may one day be restored in Bulgaria. Though the words have been used in this paper in every sense, ranging from ironic and satiric to literal, there can be no better watchwords for a prince than these, "Duty and Affection."

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Contains a few amusing sidelights.

Mortimer, Raymond, ed. Leaves From a Journal. By Victoria, Queen of Great Britain. London: A. Deutsch, 1961.

Ponsonby, Arthur, Baron Shulbrede. Henry Ponsonby, Queen Victoria's Private Secretary; his Life from His Letters. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943.

Further sidelights.

Ponsonby, Sir Frederick, ed. Letters of the Empress Frederick. By Victoria, Dowager Empress of Germany. London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1928.

Interesting background material.

Raymond, John, ed. Queen Victoria's Early Letters. By Victoria, Queen of Great Britain. London: B. T. Batsford, Ltd., 1907.

Not particularly instructive.

Reeve, Henry, ed. C. C. Greville's Journals of the Reigns of George IV and William IV. By Charles C. F. Greville. 3 vols. London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1875. I.

Although considered a sine qua non for any work that pertains to the period, Greville is often speculative and sometimes unsound.

. The Greville Memoirs (Second Part), A Journal of the Reign of Queen Victoria From 1837 to 1852. By Charles C. F. Greville. 3 vols. London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1885. III.

ROYAL MEMOIRS

Alice, Princess of Great Britain. For My Grandchildren. London: Evans Brothers Limited, 1966.

Useful information on the Coburgs after and during their re-establishment in Germany. Has little "halo effect."

Anastasia, Grand Duchess of Russia (?). I Am Anastasia. Transl. by Verlog Heinrich Scheffler. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1958.

Of little value for this study.

Bülow, Bernhard H.M.K., Fürst von. Memoirs: 1897-1903. London: Putnam, 1930.

Contains some insights into the character of King Ferdinand I of Bulgaria.

. Memoirs of Prince von Bülow, 1903-1909. Transl. by Geoffrey Dunlop. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1931.
Material on Ferdinand of Bulgaria.

Edward, Duke of Windsor. A King's Story. New York: Putnam, 1951.
Contains only passing reference to Grand Duke Charles of Saxe-Coburg.

Leopold I, King of the Belgians. Reminiscences of King Leopold, Letters and Reports to Queen Victoria, 1862.

At least a part of these scattered notes by King Leopold I was apparently published for private circulation in 1862. Although such a volume was not available for this study, sections of it appear, under varying titles and with varying citations, in Redmond's House of Hanover and Grey's Early Years of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort. It would seem that at least part of Leopold's reminiscences were written or, possibly, rewritten, at Queen Victoria's request, with the specific intention that they would appear in Grey's book, a study that was undertaken at the wish of Queen Victoria. Leopold's writings give useful information on the movements and plans of the Coburgs during the Napoleonic and post-Napoleonic eras.

Marie, Grand Duchess of Russia. Education of a Princess; a Memoir. Transl. under the supervision of Russell Lord. New York: The Viking Press, 1931.

Not particularly useful. It repeats descriptions of the country and the castles of Coburg given elsewhere, and it records Marie's dislike of the Coburgs.

Marie Louise, Princess of Great Britain. My Memories of Six Reigns. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1957.

Contains some information on the re-establishment of the Coburgs in Germany.

Müller, F. Max, ed. Memoirs of Baron [Christian Friedrich] Stockmar. His memoirs as assembled from his papers by his son, Baron E[rnst Alfred Christian] von Stockmar. 2 vols. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1872. I, II.

Invaluable. Not only was Stockmar in the inner councils of the House of Coburg, but his papers also include many of the letters of Albert, Ernst II, Victoria, and Leopold. Also included are many letters of the rivals and enemies of the Coburgs, such as Louis-Philippe, King of the French.

Panam, Pauline. Memoirs of Madame Panam. Transl. by W. H. Ireland. n. p., 1823.

This volume, itself, was not available for this study, but it is quoted extensively in Redman's House of Hanover. Highly suspect, biased, and sensationalized, it details events that cannot be confirmed elsewhere.

Ponsonby, Frederick Edward Grey, Baron Sysonby. Recollections of Three Reigns. New York: Dutton, 1952.

Not useful for Coburg research.

Ponsonby, Sir Frederick Edward Grey [Knight]. Sidelights on Queen Victoria. New York: Sears Publishing Company, 1930.

More sidelights.

BOOKS

Aceland, Eric and Bartlett, E. H. The House of Windsor. Toronto, Canada: The John C. Winston Co., Limited, 1937.

A rather general book of background material.

Ames, Winslow. Prince Albert and Victoria Taste. New York: Viking Press, 1968.

Too specialized in its own area of interest to be very helpful.

Aronson, Theo. Defiant Dynasty: The Coburgs of Belgium. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1968.

Very helpful on the later years of King Leopold I, his style of reign, and his consolidation of power.

Ascherson, Neal. The King Incorporated, Leopold II in the Age of Trusts. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1963.

Too specialized in its own area of interest to be very useful on the subject of the establishment of the first Coburgs in Belgium.

Balfour, Michael Leonard Graham. The Kaiser and His Times. London: Cresset Press, 1964.

Not very useful on the subject of the Coburgs in Germany.

Battiscombe, Georgina. Queen Alexandra. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969.

Contains nothing of value that is not covered elsewhere.

Bell, Herbert C. F. Lord Palmerston. 2 vols. London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1936. I.

A good deal of useful material on the Spanish Marriages.

Benson, Edward Frederick. Daughters of Queen Victoria. London: Cassell, 1939.

Too general to be useful.

_____. King Edward VII: An Appreciation. London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1934.

- _____. Queen Victoria. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1935.
Another general background work.
- Bird, Anthony. The Damnable Duke of Cumberland. London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1966.
Follows the old theory that sees Cumberland as an ogre.
Contains little on the Coburgs in Germany.
- Bolitho, Hector. King Edward VIII; An Intimate Biography. New York: The Literary Guild of America, Inc., 1937.
Not useful.
- Buchan, John, first Baron Tweedsmuir. The King's Grace, 1910-1935. London: Hodden and Stoughton, Ltd., 1935.
- _____. The People's King, George V: A Narrative of Twenty Five Years. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1935.
- Cecil, Algernon. Queen Victoria and Her Prime Ministers. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1953.
Contains no inside Coburg material.
- Cecil, David. Melbourne. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1939.
Some general background on Queen Victoria.
- Conacher, J. B. The Aberdeen Coalition 1852-1855. Cambridge at the University Press, 1968.
Little on the Spanish Marriages.
- Corti, Egon Caesar Conte. The English Empress, A Study in the Relations between Queen Victoria and Her Eldest Daughter, Empress Frederick of Germany. London: Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1957.
Interesting as background to the letters of Queen Victoria and Empress Frederick.
- Cowles, Virginia. Gay Monarch; The Life and Pleasures of Edward VII. New York: Harper & Row, 1956.
- _____. The Kaiser. London: Collins, 1963.
- Creston, Dormer [Dorothy Julia Baynes]. The Youthful Queen Victoria; A Discursive Narrative. New York: Putnam, 1952.
Undistinguished biography.
- Dangerfield, George. Victoria's Heir; the Education of a Prince. London: Constable, 1941.
- Davis, Arthur Newton. The Kaiser As I Know Him. New York: Harper, 1918.
Of little use.

de Meeus, Adrien, History of the Belgians. Transl. by G. Gordon. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publisher, 1962.

A useful source of information on the establishment of the Coburgs in Belgium.

Duff, David. The Shy Princess; the Life of HRH Princess Beatrice, the Youngest Daughter and Constant Companion of Queen Victoria. London: Evans Brothers, Limited, 1958.

Does not deal with inside Coburg material.

Eyck, Frank. The Prince Consort; a Political Biography. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959.

Missing from the library, presumed stolen.

Frankland, Noble. Imperial Tragedy; Nicholas II, Last of the Tsars. New York: Coward-McCann, 1960.

Graves, Armgaard Karl [pseud.]. The Secrets of the Hohenzollerns. New York: McBride, Nast and Company, 1915.

Colorful, but of doubtful value.

Grey, C. The Early Years of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1867.

This book proved very valuable. It contains a wealth of material on Prince Albert and his immediate family, the German Coburgs.

Harcave, Sidney Samuel. Years of the Golden Cockerel; the Last Romanov Tsars, 1814-1917. New York: Macmillan, 1968.

Howarth, T.E.B. Citizen-King: The Life of Louis-Philippe, King of the French. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1961.

Gives one view of the Spanish Marriages.

Johnson, Douglas. Aspects of French History. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963.

Contains material on the Spanish Marriages.

Jonas, Klaus W. The Life of Crown Prince Wilhelm. Transl. by Charles W. Bangert. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1961.

Kürenberg, Joachim von. The Kaiser; a Life of Wilhelm II, Last Emperor of Germany. Transl. by H. T. Russell and Herta Hagen. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955.

Kurtz, Harold. The Second Reich: Kaiser Wilhelm II and His Germany. New York: American Heritage Press, 1970.

Lee, Sir Sidney. King Edward VII; a Biography. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1925.

Not useful for inside Coburg material.

- Longford, Elizabeth (Harmon) Pakenham, Countess of [Title by marriage]. Queen Victoria: Born to Succeed. New York: Harper & Row, 1965.
Contains material on the marriage of Albert and Victoria, and some Coburg background material.
- _____. Victoria R. I. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964.
An earlier, less complete, version of the book above.
- Macdermott, Mercia. A History of Bulgaria: 1393-1885. London: George Allen & Unwin, Limited, 1962.
Although only a general history, this book was not without value. It has material on the founding of the Coburg dynasty in Bulgaria.
- Madol, Hans Roger. Ferdinand of Bulgaria. Transl. by Kenneth Kirkness. London: Hurst & Blackett, 1933.
Very useful. Material on the Bulgarian Coburgs is rare at best.
- Magnus, Sir Philip Montefiore [Baronet]. King Edward the Seventh. London: J. Murray, 1964.
- Mallinson, Vernon. Belgium. Nations of the World Series. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970.
- Martin, Theodore. The Life of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort. 5 vols. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1875, I.
Thoroughgoing study of the life of Prince Albert. Very useful information on the German Coburgs.
- Massie, Robert K. Nicholas and Alexandra. New York: Atheneum, 1967.
Of only peripheral interest to this study.
- Nicolson, Hon. Harold George. King George the Fifth. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1953.
- Pemberton, W. Baring. Lord Palmerston. London: Batchworth Press, 1954.
Contains information on the Spanish Marriages and Palmerston's role in them.
- Petrie, Sir Charles Alexander [Baronet]. King Alfonso XIII and His Age. London: Chapman & Hall, 1963.
- Pilpil, Vicente R. Alfonso XIII. Vol. XII of Twayne's Rulers and Statesmen of the World. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969.
- Pope-Hennessy, James. Queen Mary, 1867-1953. New York: Knopf, 1960.
- Porter, McKenzie. Overature to Victoria. London: Redman, 1962.
A good general background.

Redman, Alvin. The House of Hanover. New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1960.

Has a very good section on the Coburgs of Germany.

Shannon, R. T. Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation, 1876. London: Nelson, 1963.

Southgate, Donald. The Most English Minister: The Politics and Policies of Palmerston. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966.

Useful comments on the Spanish Marriages.

Strachey, Giles Lytton. Queen Victoria. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1930.

Early "muckraking" treatment. Has some general background on Victoria and Albert.

Tisdall, E [velyn]. E [nest]. P. Queen Victoria's Private Life: 1837-1901. New York: The John Day Company, 1962.

Has a section on Victoria and Leopold of Albany.

Townsend, Walter and Townsend, L. The Biography of HRH the Prince of Wales. New York: Macmillan Company, 1929.

Willis, G. M. Ernest Augustus: Duke of Cumberland and King of Hanover. London: Arthur Barber, 1954.

This work disagrees with the older views of Cumberland as an ogre.

Wilson, Lawrence Patrick Ray. The Incredible Kaiser; a Portrait of Wilhelm II. London: R. Hale, 1963.

Of little value as far as the background of the German Coburgs is concerned.